The Dissertation Committee for Briana Marie Toole Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Dissertation:

Knowledge and Social Identity

Committee:

Sinan Dogramaci, Supervisor

Ray Buchanan

David Sosa

Louise Antony

Miriam Schoenfield

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by

Briana Marie Toole

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Abstract

Knowledge and Social Identity

Briana Marie Toole, PhD

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Supervisor: Sinan Dogramaci

There is a tension, allegedly, between traditional epistemology and standpoint epistemology. Traditional epistemologists, on the one hand, hold that knowledge is sensitive to epistemic (truth-conducive) features alone. By contrast, standpoint epistemologists argue that knowledge, in some cases, is sensitive to non-epistemic features related to the agent's social identity. My goal here is to vindicate this thesis. Though the thesis of standpoint epistemology is controversial, it plays an important role in illuminating a phenomenon that emerges in our epistemic practices - epistemic oppression. Epistemic oppression occurs when an epistemic agent is excluded from the practices of knowledge production. If the aim of epistemology is to bring us closer to truth, then any practice that subverts this aim ought to be thoroughly investigated. However, as I will argue, our capacity to root out epistemic oppression is limited to the extent that we continue operating within the traditional epistemological framework. In this dissertation, I will argue that the traditional epistemologist can either acquiesce to the standpoint epistemologist's claim that knowledge is sensitive to non-epistemic features related to an agent's

social identity, or consider social identity an epistemic feature. I further clarify the standpoint thesis, and examine why standpoint epistemology is able, where traditional epistemology fails, to understand epistemic oppression. I close by considering applications of the thesis to other questions in epistemology, with a particular eye towards issues in the peer disagreement literature.

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Chapter One: Introduction

> *A father and son have a car accident and are both hurt badly. They are both taken to separate hospitals. When the boy is taken in for an operation, the surgeon says "I can not do the surgery because this is my son." How is this possible?*

This riddle aptly captures the view that facts about one's social conditions shape inquiry. Often people cannot solve this riddle because they're unable to imagine that the surgeon is a woman. In this case, the surgeon is the boy's mother.

That facts related to one's social conditions shape inquiry is not a new idea, but it is a controversial one. Attempts by social epistemologists in general, and standpoint epistemologists in particular, to motivate the claim that features related to one's social conditions are relevant to knowledge have been met with skepticism at best and great criticism at worst. My aim here is to legitimate the idea that social conditions, and in particular, social identity, can shape what one knows about the world.

To understand why these views have been met with such outrange, I propose that we start by thinking about traditional treatments of knowledge within academic discussions. The study of knowledge has a long and storied tradition in philosophy, reaching back to Plato, who is often said to be the first to analyze knowledge as *justified, true belief*.[1] Such accounts have since been refuted, notably by Edmund Gettier (1963), who noted that justified true belief can, and often does, fall short of knowledge (in cases where we arrive at the belief by luck, for instance). But still, most accounts of knowledge share at their core an assumption that features relevant to knowledge are *truth-conducive* - that is, they are features that make it *more likely* that a belief is true. Such features include, for instance, justification, evidence, reliability, and so on. Following

[1] Plato seems to be hinting at such a definition in the *Theaetetus at* 201 and perhaps accepting one at *Meno* 98.

Jason Stanley (2005), I propose that we call those views that limit knowledge to such features *intellectualist.* Intellectualists hold that knowledge depends only on epistemic features - features like those listed above. It does not, they argue, depend on non-epistemic features - features which are not (straight-forwardly) truth-conducive.

Intellectualism has long been accepted as the standard view in epistemology. Plato defended it. Descartes held some version of it. Today, prominent thinkers such as Keith DeRose (2009), as well as Earl Conee and Richard Feldman (1985), offer up variations of knowledge rooted in this traditional view. Arguably, those who reject the role of intuition in knowledge, as well as those who reject the essentiality of indexicals, such as Josh Dever and Herman Cappelen (2014) are also committed to some version of the traditional view. I also suspect that eminent philosopher Paul Boghossian (2014), and perhaps too Thomas Nagel (1989), number among the intellectualists' members.

This view is also fairly entrenched in our culture. The 'Rational Racist' is responding to facts, not race, and it's his detractors who are led astray by their membership in marginalized groups. Popular television shows, like *Dragnet*, remind us to stick to "just the facts, ma'am". In books, take *The Talented Mr. Ripley,* for instance, we see that 'women's intuition' is regarded as distorting.

More significantly, this view is embedded in our social, legal, and healthcare institutions. Patricia Williams (1991), for instance, notes that a legal article she submitted for a symposium was initially rejected for including a reference to her race (Williams is a black woman), which violated their editorial policy. Likewise, Karen Jones (2002) discusses the case of a US judge who initially denied refugee status to a woman who fled her native Togo in order to escape female mutilation on the grounds that he took her testimony to 'lack rationality'. Nancy Tuana

(2006) has similarly examined the adverse impact of health care initiatives that fail to center women's needs and instead treat the male body as the medical norm.

As the aim of epistemology is truth, we might be, for good reason, sympathetic to the analysis of knowledge as offered by the intellectualist. After all, if we're concerned with acquiring truth and obtaining knowledge, shouldn't we focus our attention on all and only those features that make truth and knowledge more likely?

Despite the distinguished pedigree of the traditional view, there are a number of important cases that intellectualism renders unintelligible. Consider, for instance, the following case, to which I will return later:

> *Unwilling Barista:* Elena is really looking forward to the in-house philosophy conference her department hosts every year, so she arrives bright and early, and in serious need of coffee. She greets her colleagues and bounds toward the coffee pot only to discover, after her first sip, no less, that this is yesterday's coffee. So she brews a new pot. But when she returns for the much-anticipated cup, the pot is empty. It turns out that her fellow conference goers, all white men, really wanted coffee, too. Slightly annoyed, she mentions to her friend Preston how sexist it is that all the men waited for her to arrive and brew a fresh pot. But Preston replies "You're overreacting - you see sexism everywhere! Isn't it more likely that they just don't know how to use the coffee pot?"

Suppose that, in this situation, the behavior of Elena's colleagues is in fact sexist. We will need an account that both explains why Elena knows this and why Preston fails to. As a standpoint epistemologist, I argue that this case is explained by appealing to facts about Elena's social identity. That she is a woman, I submit, places her in a better position to know about what

behavior is (or counts as) sexist. Such a case is unintelligible by the traditional epistemologist's standards. Or so I will argue.

Is it not possible that whether a person recognizes some piece of evidence *as* evidence depends on features that are non-epistemic? Does, for instance, your capacity to discover the answer to the riddle above depend on facts about your social environment?

In the US context, where our schema for 'doctor' and our schema for 'woman' conflict, it's difficult to arrive at the correct answer. But in Russia, where most practicing physicians are women, I imagine this riddle is hardly a riddle at all (Ramakrishnan, Sambuco, and Jagsi 2014). If knowledge is sensitive to features like one's social conditions, then it seems that the intellectualist is wrong. For it is the case that, in some instances, knowledge depends on features that are non-epistemic, features like your social identity. This is the claim I aim to motivate here.

Narrowing our investigation from social conditions, I will here offer a somewhat different analysis of knowledge that interrogates the relationship between knowledge and social identity. Standpoint epistemology, a theoretical framework that I develop and clarify, is the thesis that what a person is in a position to know depends on facts about her social identity.

In contrast to intellectualism, standpoint epistemology is a member of a family of views that hold that knowledge *does* depend on some non-epistemic features. For instance, where pragmatic encroachers argue that practical interests make knowledge more or less difficult, standpoint epistemologists argue that social identity makes knowledge more or less difficult.

I argue that the traditional view of epistemology must accommodate the claim that knowledge is sensitive to non-epistemic features related to one's social identity. Primarily, I defend this claim because in committing to intellectualism, traditional epistemologists contribute to *epistemic oppression*.

Epistemic oppression "refers to epistemic exclusions afforded positions and communities that produce deficiencies in social knowledge" (Dotson 2012: 24). Deficiencies in social knowledge include, for instance, hermeneutical gaps that result in marginalized knowers being incapable of understanding their own experiences[2] (e.g. marital rape), as well as the inability of marginalized groups to share their knowledge because of identity prejudice[3] (e.g. testimony regarding sexual assault is not taken seriously because women are viewed as hysterical and conniving). These epistemic exclusions disproportionately affect marginalized groups - women, people of color, gays and lesbians, and so on.

Here, for instance, are the options available to the traditional epistemologist who wishes to preserve the notion that knowledge is independent from non-epistemic features like social identity in the case of *Unwilling Barista:*

i. Deny that Elena has knowledge.

ii. Accept that Elena has knowledge, and argue that she has some evidence which Preston does not.

If the traditional epistemologists pursues (i) then, I argue, he will have epistemically oppressed Elena by discounting as knowledge her testimony that her colleagues' behavior is sexist. And I will argue that the traditional epistemologist cannot both pursue (ii) and maintain a commitment to intellectualism.

There is no account the traditional epistemologist can offer which explains *why* Elena has evidence that Preston does not which does appeal to facts about her social identity. That is, I suggest that any complete explanation will require that we appeal, somewhere down the road, to non-epistemic facts related to Elena's social identity. Of course, work must be done to examine

[2] Fricker (1999) calls this a hermeneutical injustice.
[3] Fricker (2007) calls this a testimonial injustice.

precisely how, and why, it is the case that social identity impacts knowledge. That is what I set out to accomplish in these pages.

To be clear, this project is not an entirely new enterprise. The idea that knowledge is sensitive to features related to one's social identity gained traction during the rise of second-wave feminism during the 1960s, and interest continued well into the 1990s during third-wave feminism. During this time, the project was taken up by philosophers of science, who largely focused on examining how race and gender influence what research questions we ask, which hypotheses we're most likely to entertain, and what theoretical presuppositions we bring to bear on our research. But beyond the philosophy of science, the project of standpoint epistemology has largely been abandoned in epistemology. Partly, this is because of the perceived tension between standpoint epistemology and traditional epistemology. I thus begin in chapter 1 by distinguishing the various assumptions that guide the traditional epistemologist. In undertaking this task, I hope to elucidate the source of the apparent tension between this school of thought and standpoint epistemology (and the various positions that might be associated with or share features similar to that of standpoint epistemology). Furthermore, gaining a better understanding of the basic commitments of the traditional epistemologist will allow us to better see why it is that our epistemic practices, as they exist in their current form, stand in need of revision.

Furthermore, despite the vast literature on the topic, standpoint epistemology, as a framework, is radically underdeveloped. Consequently, its role in making salient certain features of our epistemic practices - namely, epistemic oppression - have been largely ignored. My goal is to fill in the existing gaps, and in doing so, to make explicit how, and why, it is that existing epistemic practices facilitate certain forms of injustice. A large part of my project here is to offer a model of how the thesis of standpoint epistemology can be interpreted. Thus, in chapter 2, I

offer several interpretations of the bare thesis of standpoint epistemology. In this chapter, I begin by unpacking the general version of the standpoint thesis, and exploring the various other commitments of the view. Then, I offer two ways of filling out that general thesis. I begin my examining the material version of the thesis, before turning to an epistemic reading. I next show how each of these readings can be usefully applied to understand forms of epistemic injustice that have been discussed in the budding literature on epistemic oppression. I close this chapter by arguing that traditional epistemology, as defined above, not only makes these injustices opaque, but is itself a cause of epistemic oppression.

As I have discussed above, standpoint epistemology was abandoned, in part, because of the supposed tension between it and traditional epistemology. But the project was also abandoned because of difficulties in explaining some of the additional commitments of standpoint epistemology. Of particular concern is the standpoint epistemologist's commitment to the *epistemic privilege thesis*. This thesis captures the notion that some knowers have better, more accurate knowledge because of their marginalized social positioning. The epistemic privilege thesis has been widely resisted, by mainstream and feminist epistemologists alike. In chapter three, I aim to vindicate the standpoint epistemologist's commitment to this thesis. Drawing on the peer disagreement literature, I use the concept of epistemic peerhood to provide a clearer definition of epistemic privilege as an epistemic position in which a person is more likely to be correct, either because she has a greater body of evidence relevant to the question at hand, or because she is more competent with respect to that evidence. I next provide four arguments to establish that, in the social domain, marginalized knowers satisfy these conditions. I then use these arguments to motivate the claim that, in the social domain, dominantly situated knowers are not the epistemic peers of marginalized knowers.

Denying that knowledge is sensitive to non-epistemic features, features like one's social identity, comes at a cost. It is a cost that is paid by those who are largely invisible in the academy - women, people of color, gays and lesbians, queer folks, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and so on. It is oppression - socially, politically, epistemically. These individuals will continue to be invisible so long as our analyses of knowledge rule out their contributions.

In order to amplify the voices of those who have been silenced, we need to understand the forces that have allowed for that silencing. In this project, I attempt to give an analytical treatment of oppression so that we can understand its very root. These issues have typically been the purview of women's and gender studies and ethnic studies departments. The goal of my dissertation is to bring this conversation into philosophy. While other fields in the humanities give a historical analysis of oppression, explore resistance movements, or evaluate what systemic structures facilitate oppression, there is a distinct value in offering an in-depth analytical account of oppression. Primarily, we can begin to understand why these forces are so inflexibly rigid, how they are embedded in our cognitive system such that they alter the world we see, and what is required to undermine these systems. While most work in the humanities is engaged with addressing the symptoms of a diseased system - a system that allows for oppression - my goal is to tackle the problem at the root. Oppression happens because we don't have the language to understand it. In this work I aim to give us the words to understand, because only then are we no longer silenced. Until we can fully understand the origins of oppression in thought itself, we will continue to struggle to understand, to empathize, and to collaborate with those who are the most vulnerable among us.

I believe the most fruitful way to empower the silenced and the marginalized is by recognizing the role our social identity plays in how we know, understand, and interpret the world. And this leads us to the thesis of standpoint epistemology.

Chapter Two: Demarginalizing Standpoint Epistemology

Standpoint epistemology has been extensively discussed within academic philosophy and has many fruitful applications, but it is underdeveloped. As a result, standpoint epistemology is open to a number of diverse (and sometimes, conflicting) interpretations. My first goal here is to give a specific interpretation of standpoint epistemology that is unavailable elsewhere in the literature.

Many of the feminist philosophers who have advocated for standpoint epistemology have asserted that there is a tension between mainstream, or 'traditional' epistemology, and standpoint epistemology (Anderson 1995; Baber 1994). However, little has been done to examine what the source of this tension is. My second goal in this paper is to explain what this tension consists in. I do so by identifying a plausible characterization of traditional epistemology according to which it does stand in a clear tension with standpoint epistemology. This characterization is of traditional epistemology as a form of *intellectualism* (to use a technical label Jason Stanley has recently popularized). I then investigate the conflict between standpoint epistemology and intellectualism.

Intellectualism is the thesis that knowledge does not depend on *non-epistemic features* (Stanley 2005: 6). My proposed interpretation of standpoint epistemology will be as a form of the view that knowledge is sensitive to non-epistemic features. Therefore, standpoint epistemology belongs to the family of views that denies the thesis of intellectualism. Members of this family include some forms of epistemic relativism (Neta 2007; MacFarlane 2011) and pragmatic encroachment (Hawthorne 2004; Stanley 2005).

Standpoint epistemology, as I will interpret it, takes an epistemic agent's social identity to be a non-epistemic factor that makes a difference to what she is in a position to know. This is an important, but controversial thesis. It owes its controversial nature to the fact that it is in tension

with at least some characterizations of traditional epistemology. And it is an important thesis, I suggest, because it sheds light on a phenomenon that emerges in our epistemic practices - epistemic oppression. Epistemic oppression is the obstruction or exclusion of epistemic agents from the practices of acquiring or sharing knowledge (Fricker 1999, 2007; Dotson 2012, 2014).

My aim is to clarify and develop the theoretical framework of standpoint epistemology, and to use this framework as a tool to better understand epistemic oppression. However, we can only begin to make inroads into this latter project insofar as we manage to clarify the landscape of standpoint epistemology. And so, to better understand epistemic oppression, we must first be clear about the thesis under discussion.

The standpoint thesis, as I have articulated it here, features a number of technical terms that, before I proceed, need to be defined. I define an *epistemic agent* as any person who has the capacity to acquire knowledge and to share knowledge with others.[4] The distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic features has been used to frame the debate between intellectualists and their opponents like Stanley (2005), Hawthorne (2004), Fantl and McGrath (2009), and so on. Neither these authors nor I have a precise definition of when a feature is epistemic.[5] However, paradigm examples give us a strong grasp on the category of epistemic factors: the examples are evidence and justification, truth, belief, reliability—in short, those properties that featured in the post-Gettier trend that characterizes traditional epistemology. It is in this sense that the standpoint thesis is in tension with traditional epistemology, and intellectualism more specifically.

[4] I define epistemic agent in this way in order to better conceptualize epistemic oppression. As epistemic oppression involves obstructing or excluding some person from the practices of knowledge-production, it has the effect of preventing a person from being a distinctly *epistemic* agent.
[5] The difficulty of giving a definition was noted long ago by Alvin Goldman (1979: 2).

Here, I focus on the role that non-epistemic features, like those related to social identity, play in knowledge-acquisition. However, before we can further explore what role (if any) social identity plays in knowledge, more must be said about the apparent tension between traditional epistemology, as I have characterized it, and standpoint epistemology. I thus begin here by distinguishing the various assumptions that guide the intellectualist position. In undertaking this task, I hope to elucidate the source of the tension between this school of thought and standpoint epistemology.

My goal, in doing so, is to offer one way of giving a more concrete specification to the general framework of standpoint epistemology. In order to accomplish this task, I will use as an expository tool a distinct, but related view - pragmatic encroachment. Pragmatic encroachment, like standpoint epistemology, suggests that knowledge is sensitive to non-epistemic features. But where the standpoint epistemologist emphasizes social identity as the non-epistemic feature that makes a difference to what a person is in a position to know, pragmatic encroachment instead focuses on the practical costs associated with being wrong. Using pragmatic encroachment as a spring board, I will show how it is possible to have a similar view that takes social identity to be the non-epistemic feature that makes a difference to what a person is in a position to know.

1. Exploring the tension

As my proposed interpretation of standpoint epistemology belongs to the family of views that explores the influence of non-epistemic features on knowledge acquisition, part of my project involves spelling out the parallels between standpoint epistemology and these views. To that end, I explore the relationship between my view and those like pragmatic encroachment. But before I do, I first offer my interpretation of intellectualism in order to better understand what is at the

heart of the apparent tension between traditional epistemology and standpoint epistemology (and others in this family).

First, as mentioned, traditional epistemology can be characterized as an endorsement of intellectualism. In defense of this way of characterizing the foil that standpoint epistemologists say their view is in tension with, consider two of the central ideas that leading proponents of standpoint epistemology have attributed to traditional epistemology, theses they aim to criticize. These theses are at the heart of the tension between traditional epistemology and standpoint epistemology. The first, the atomistic view of knowers, is a view which characterizes epistemic agents as generic or interchangeable (Grasswick 2004). The second, aperspectivalism, is the view that an epistemic agent's justification for some proposition must be accessible to other epistemic agents who are exposed to the same epistemic features of a situation (Kukla 2006).[6] Where the intellectualist is committed to both the atomistic view of knowers and aperspectivalism, the standpoint epistemologist (and others in this family) must reject these views.

As I interpret it, the atomistic view of knowers conceives of knowers as 'substitutable', one for the other, such that certain subjective features of the knower make no difference in whether she is in a position to know some proposition. A number of other philosophers have explored the role of the atomistic view in our epistemologies, including, for example, Allison Jaggar (1983), Naomi Scheman (1995), and Lorraine Code (1995), who writes that the atomistic view

> …presuppose[s] a universal, homogenous, and essential human nature that allows knowers to be substituted for one another…knowers worthy of that title can act as 'surrogate knowers'

[6] Note that this principle is restricted to empirical knowledge, as by definition, introspective knowledge fails to be aperspectival.

> who are able to put themselves in anyone's place and know her or his circumstances and interests in just the same way she or he would know them. Hence those circumstances are deemed epistemically irrelevant. (Code 1995: 23)

The atomistic view of knowers suggests that we "transcend [the] particularity and contingency" of individual knowers (ibid). I offer a specific reading of what these particularities and contingencies are that the atomistic view denies make a difference to what we can know. I suggest the atomistic view of knowers is best interpreted in the following spirit: a knower could be substituted or exchanged with another knower and each should arrive at the same belief despite differences in their social identity or practical investments, if they share all epistemic features. Thus, I interpret the atomistic view of knowers as emphasizing that evidence, reliability, and such traditional features, are exclusively what is epistemically significant.

To that end, the atomistic view of knowers nicely complements aperspectivalism. On the interpretation that I propose, aperspectivalism means simply that one's evidence for some proposition is such that it is accessible to other agents. There is a good deal of support for this ideal in the literature. Thomas Kelly, for instance, writes

> ..it is thought central to the concept of evidence that evidence is by its very nature the kind of thing that can generate rational convergence of opinion *in virtue of* being shared by multiple individuals. This encourages the idea that any genuine piece of *evidence can in principle be grasped by multiple individuals*; anything which cannot be so grasped is either not genuine evidence or is at best a degenerate species thereof. (Kelly 2016; italics mine)

Support for this ideal is also present in the works of prominent philosophers of science, including Herbert Feigl (1953) and Carl Hempel (1952), as well as Peter Railton (1985), who writes that "… objective inquiry uses procedures that are intersubjective and independent of particular

individuals and circumstances—for example … it makes no essential use of introspective or subjectively privileged evidence in theory assessment" (Railton 1991: 764).

What does it mean, though, to say that evidence is *accessible* or can be *grasped* by multiple individuals? I propose that we interpret the view that evidence must be *accessible* in the following way: evidence is accessible if any other epistemic agent who had the epistemic features that I have is in a position to know what I know. Of course, we can still ask what features Kukla, Kelly, and others imagine to be 'inaccessible'. It's plausible, and logically possible, that private, unique features of an epistemic agent's circumstances are features that I could also possess. Consider, for instance, that I don't have the perceptual experiences that you have, but that there is a sense in which I could have those perceptual experiences. I advance a proposal for how to divide the line between what is accessible and what is not. Epistemic features are those features which are, in a certain natural sense, accessible to everyone. But at least some non-epistemic features, in particular, those associated with social identity, are not so accessible. Aperspectivalism, then, is the view that knowledge is sensitive only to those features which are accessible to all epistemic agents.

Aperspectivalism is an epistemic ideal that is meant to reinforce the atomistic view of knowers. Lorraine Daston writes that aperspectivalism is "the ethos of the interchangeable and therefore featureless observer", the goal of which is to "[eliminate] individual (or occasionally group, as in the case of national styles of anthropomorphism) idiosyncrasies" from our epistemic practices (Daston 1992: 599, 609). Thus, intellectualism is meant to rule out the influence of idiosyncratic features, which include distorting influences like ideology, bias, prejudice, and other subjective features, like one's preferences, desires, and so on. By restricting which features are taken to be epistemically relevant, the atomistic view of knowers, together with

aperspectivalism, ensures that what epistemic agents are in a position to know is not determined by idiosyncratic features particular to the agent.

However, as defenders of pragmatic encroachment – alternatively known as interest-relative invariantism or subject-sensitive invariantism – have argued, there is some extent to which intellectualism fails to accurately map onto our intuitions in certain cases. To illustrate, let me present two examples that have been given by Keith DeRose (1992, 2002), and also by Stanley (2005), but that I have modified for my purposes here:

> *Low Stakes.* Hannah and her wife Sarah are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit their checks. It is not important that they do so, as they have no impending bills. But as they drive past the bank, they notice that the lines inside are very long, as they often are on Friday afternoons. Realizing that it isn't very important that the paychecks are deposited right away, Hannah says, 'I know the bank will be open tomorrow, since I was there just two weeks ago on Saturday morning. So we can deposit our paychecks tomorrow morning.'

> *High Stakes.* James and his husband Amir are driving home on a Friday afternoon. They plan to stop at the bank on the way home to deposit their paychecks. Noticing the lines are long, James says that he was at the bank two weeks before on a Saturday morning, and it was open. However, they have an impending bill due, and very little in their account, so it is very important that they deposit their paychecks by Saturday. And, as Amir points out, banks do change their hours. James says, 'I guess you're right. I don't know that the bank will be open tomorrow.'[7]

[7] James and Hannah both believe that the bank is open. But given the practical costs, James does not take himself to *know* that the bank is open.

The intellectualist and the pragmatic encroacher will differ in their analyses of the preceding examples. Stanley takes it that our intuitive reactions to these cases will be as follows: we will agree that in *Low Stakes*, Hannah *does* know that the bank will be open tomorrow, and that in *High Stakes*, James is right in thinking that he *does not* know that the bank will be open. We can represent the pragmatic encroacher's argument as follows:

1. Hannah knows the bank is open but James does not know the bank is open.
2. Hannah and James share the same epistemic features.
3. Therefore, non-epistemic features make a difference to what an epistemic agent is in a position to know.

The pragmatic encroacher argues that there is an asymmetry in knowledge, and that the feature that best accounts for this asymmetry is a non-epistemic feature - namely, the practical costs in the case.

The intellectualist, on the other hand, denies that there is any asymmetry in knowledge, and thus denies premise one. Consequently, the intellectualist will be forced to argue that it is either the case that both Hannah and James know that the bank will be open, or neither of the two know this. The intellectualist must take this position because his view rules out the role of non-epistemic features - like the costs associated with being wrong - in his analysis of knowledge.

In contrast, according to pragmatic encroachment, practical facts, like one's impending bills, do make a difference in what an epistemic agent is in a position to know. That is, from the point of view of the pragmatic encroacher, the stakes – that is, the costs associated with being wrong – partly determine what we are in a position to know. Thus, if for Hannah the stakes were high, she would not be in a position to know that the bank will be open on Saturday (and the reverse holds for James).

We can see that in *Low Stakes* and *High Stakes*, the epistemic agents are exposed to the same epistemic features. Both Hannah and James have evidence that the bank may be open on Saturday, as it was open two weeks ago on a Saturday morning. They are also both aware that banks change their hours, and thus the bank may fail to be open on the Saturday in question. As these are the only features of the epistemic situation available to both agents, then according to aperspectivalism, this is the only information on which they should base their judgment about *p*: that the bank will be open tomorrow.

The pragmatic encroacher, however, denies that one's justification for some proposition, *p*, must be accessible to all epistemic agents exposed to the same epistemic features of a situation, *S*. Primarily, this is because the pragmatic encroacher believes that features particular to an epistemic agent's situation, like the costs associated with being wrong, make a difference to whether she is in a position to know *p*. The cost of being wrong for Hannah is not a reason available to James (or vice-versa). Thus, the pragmatic encroacher must reject aperspectivalism.

The pragmatic encroacher uses the bank cases to motivate the rejection of intellectualism. This can be further used to motivate the rejection of the atomistic view of knowers and aperspectivalism. My standpoint thesis similarly entails the denial of intellectualism, and consequently, the denial of both the atomistic view of knowers and aperspectivalism. However, where the pragmatic encroacher believes one's practical commitment to a proposition's truth is a feature that is not available to other epistemic agents and which makes a difference to whether she is in a position to know *p*, the standpoint epistemologist thinks that an epistemic agent's social identity plays this role. To better understand the standpoint epistemologist's motivation for rejecting these views, I offer and analyze an example in the next section.

2. Clarifying Standpoint Epistemology

Standpoint epistemology is the view that an epistemic agent's race or gender makes a difference in what she is in a position to know. Consider the two cases below:

Black Subject. Moira, an African-American resident of Oklahoma City, is watching the local news as they turn to their lead story: "White Cop Convicted of Serial Rape of Black Women". The story covers the ongoing case of Daniel Holtzclaw, an Oklahoma City police officer, who is accused of the rape of at least 13 women who, save one, were all African-American women living in a poverty-stricken, predominantly black neighborhood in the northeastern section of the city. The report notes that many of the alleged victims were suspected of prostitution and drug possession, and that many delayed coming forward about the assault. The reporter wonders aloud about the veracity of these women's claims, citing as evidence for her doubt their criminal backgrounds.

Moira says to herself, "I know those women were sexually assaulted. They took so long to report it because he's a cop and they are poor black women - they thought no one would believe them."

White Subject. June, a white resident of Oklahoma City, is watching the local news as they turn to their lead story: "White Cop Convicted of Serial Rape of Black Women". The story covers the ongoing case of Oklahoma City police officer, Daniel Holtzclaw. Holtzclaw is accused of the rape of at least 13 women who, save one, were all African-American women living in a poverty-stricken, predominantly black neighborhood in the northeastern section of the city. The report notes that many of the alleged victims were suspected of prostitution and drug possession, and that many delayed coming forward about the assault. The reporter

wonders aloud about the veracity of these women's claims, citing as evidence for her doubt their criminal backgrounds.

June says to herself, "Those women have criminal records - they could be lying. I am in no position to know that they were sexually assaulted."

Daniel Holtzclaw did, in fact, assault these women, and in 2015 he was convicted on 13 counts of sexual assault.

Here, I'm interested in exploring whether there are certain propositions that, given features of their social identity, Moira is in a position to know but that June is not. The propositions that are of particular interest to the standpoint epistemologist are those involving social facts. In this case, Moira knows *p*: that the women were sexually assaulted. But she knows it because she also knows why they delayed reporting - that they were unlikely to be believed. It may seem controversial, perhaps, whether there is a 'fact of the matter' about why the alleged victims didn't report. Consequently, one might think that in such a case there can be no fact of the matter about who has what knowledge. In response I will make two points. First, the standpoint epistemologist is concerned primarily with knowledge of social facts, and to that extent, the standpoint epistemologist's domain of inquiry is the social world. Second, social facts, though not mind-independent (because socially constructed) are still facts about which we can have knowledge. For instance, whether or not gender maps onto 'nature's joints', it is a social fact that we employ the social categories 'women' and 'men', and that we sort people into these categories, and that perhaps the criteria we use to do so are unjust or inaccurate.

So knowledge of *p* in this case requires knowing social facts, like that these women delayed reporting, not because they were not in fact assaulted, but because they were unlikely to be believed. There are a number of propositions, like *p,* the knowledge of which requires

knowledge of further social facts. The standpoint epistemologist argues that knowing such facts depends on distinctly non-epistemic features. In particular, the standpoint epistemologist will argue that facts about the standpoint an epistemic agent occupies - where one's standpoint is determined by facts about one's social identity - will make a difference in what she is in a position to know.

Before I elaborate on the standpoint epistemologist's explanation as to why these features make a difference, let's briefly consider competing explanations in this case, focusing in particular on the intellectualist's response. The intellectualist will deny that we need to appeal to non-epistemic features to explain that Moira, but not June, knows that the women were sexually assaulted. I suggest that there are two explanations the intellectualist might pursue that will allow her to maintain a commitment to intellectualism. She can suggest that Moira knows *p* where June does not either because of 1) differences in their background beliefs or 2) differences in how they evaluate the evidence.

Explanation #1: Differences in background beliefs

One strategy that the intellectualist might appeal to is to argue that Moira and June's responses can be explained in terms of differences in their background beliefs. Background beliefs may be a part of one's total evidence - thus, if we think that Moira and June have different evidence, this explains why Moira knows *p*, but that June fails to be in a position to know *p*.

As Alvin Goldman (2010) notes, it's rare that two people share all their evidence. Although Moira and June have been exposed to the same facts about this case, they have in the past been exposed to different evidence and have had difference experiences throughout their life. These differences are relevant to Moira and June's epistemic assessment of *p*.

Given her evidence, it's possible that June thinks that the women, because they are poor and have criminal records, have other motivations for coming forward. Or, given her knowledge of police brutality in the African-American community, Moira might have a rational distrust of the police that motivates her to believe the women in this case.

If this is right, the intellectualist can maintain a commitment to intellectualism and acknowledge that evidential differences account for why Moira knows, but June fails to know, that *p*. This is because we can explain Moira's and June's knowledge claims by appealing to the fact that they each had a difference body of evidence for *p*.

However, we can stipulate in this case that both Moira and June possess the same background beliefs about the ulterior motives the women might have and about the history of police brutality in the African-American community. It seems to me that the thought experiment I offer here can be filled in by this stipulation and still be representative of a realistic and fairly common sort of case. If an intellectualist wants to insist that there will always be a difference in relevant evidence that people have, I will soon offer reasons to think otherwise (in section 3c, below). Thus, I suggest it would be inadequate to leave the story to be explained in this manner. Assuming this is the case, the intellectualist must pursue another line of explanation regarding Moira's and June's different assessments of *p*.

Furthermore, any explanation that appeals to differences in background beliefs to explain the different assessments agents may reach in regards to some proposition is to trivialize the role of evidence. If the mere fact that epistemic agents have different background beliefs can account for why epistemic agents reach different epistemic assessments in a given case, then we ought to expect there to be a large number of cases in which epistemic agents do in fact reach different

assessments. So this account does not provide a non-trivial explanation of the fact that, given the relevant shared evidence, Moira and June differ in their epistemic assessments of *p*.

Explanation #2: Differences in evaluation of the evidence

Another strategy that proponents of intellectualism might pursue in the face of these examples is to argue that Moira and June's responses reflect their different evaluations of the evidence. The evidence in this case consists of the following:

> *Q:* at least 13 women have accused Holtzclaw of sexual assault,
>
> *R:* many of the alleged victims had criminal backgrounds,
>
> *S:* many of the alleged victims were poor and black, and
>
> *T:* the alleged victims delayed coming forward (and in some instances, had to be prompted to do so).

The intellectualist may suggest that June weighs *R* and *T* more heavily than she weighs *Q* and *S,* whereas Moira weighs *Q* and *S* more heavily than the other evidence. The intellectualist might argue that it's permissible for June and Moira to weigh the evidence as they choose. And given this, the intellectualist can argue that this explains why Moira and June reach difference epistemic assessments of *p*.

This explanation appeals to a form of *permissivism* - a view which states that sometimes there is more than one rational response to a given body of evidence - as endorsed by Thomas Kelly (2014) and Miriam Schoenfield (2013), among others. Schoenfield, describing the permissivist position she adopts, argues that

> …the permissivist thinks that what it is reasonable to believe about *p* needs to be understood relative to some set of epistemic standards. Thus, the reason it is permissible for [Moira] and [June] to differ in their beliefs with regard to p is that [Moira] and [June] have *different* sets

> of standards, which differ regarding whether to believe p, given their body of evidence. (Schoenfield 2013: 200)[8]

Why might the intellectualist think we have different epistemic standards? According to Kelly, what accounts for the differences in the epistemic standards agents adopt is the value they place on either acquiring true beliefs or avoiding false beliefs. Kelly writes

> In general, the more value one gives to not believing what's false about some issue, the more it behooves one to be relatively cautious or conservative in forming beliefs about that issue. That is, the more weight one gives to not believing something false, the more it makes sense to hold out until there is a great deal of evidence that p is true before taking up the belief that p. On the other hand, the more one values not missing out on believing the truth, the more it makes sense to take a somewhat more liberal attitude about how much evidence one expects before taking up the relevant belief. (Kelly 2014: 301)

Thus, the intellectualist can appeal to differential epistemic standards to explain why it is that Moira is in a position to know something that June is not. Namely, the intellectualist can suggest that Moira places a greater value on acquiring true beliefs, whereas June places a greater value on avoiding false beliefs. This in turn explains why each weighs the evidence as she does.

This explanation may appear to satisfy the criteria for intellectualism - it may seem to both meet the condition that knowers are interchangeable, and that their reasons are accessible. On this account, all the epistemic features are the same between Moira and June. Furthermore, knowers are interchangeable in the sense that the epistemic standards of different rational thinkers are sensitive only to epistemic features. In this sense, it could be argued, it satisfies the atomistic component of intellectualism because it rules out those features that have no bearing on

[8] Note that in the original text Schoenfield is discussing epistemic agents in her own case. I have replaced the names she uses with those I give in *Black Subject/White Subject*.

the truth that *p*. Further, the reasons Moira uses in her assessment of *p* are accessible to June. The only difference between them is how they choose to weigh those reasons.

Though I find myself sympathetic to the permissivist position, this line of defense is unsatisfying as a defense of intellectualism. I grant that appealing to differences in epistemic standards will explain a great range of cases. But this explanation is incomplete, as the epistemic standards an epistemic agent adopts are partly constituted by non-epistemic features. I submit that in cases like the one described above, there is a tendency among dominantly situated knowers to be overly cautious and to favor avoiding false beliefs. By contrast, there is a tendency among marginally situated knowers to favor acquiring true beliefs.[9]

This tendency of dominantly situated knowers to favor the status quo is, I claim, a non-epistemic factor that is essential to what excludes June from being in a position to know what Moira is in a position to know. This is not a stipulative or technical categorization of the non-epistemic. The natural family of epistemic features, as it figured in traditional post-Gettier epistemology, does not have a place for this difference between dominantly and marginally situated knowers. Thus a complete explanation of why epistemic agents adopt the epistemic standards that they do will require appealing to non-epistemic facts about the agent.

3. Appealing to Standpoint Epistemology

The explanation I prefer, to the traditional alternatives considered above, is that Moira and June's differences in knowledge can be accounted for in terms of differences in the standpoint that each occupies. I will provide a simple sketch of the possible explanations the standpoint epistemologist might offer to account for why Moira, but not June, is in a position to know that the women were sexually assaulted.

[9] See Linda Alcoff (2007) and Charles Mills (1997; 2007) for further discussion on the relationship between social identity and epistemic goals.

First, the standpoint epistemologist will deny that the differences in Moira's and June's knowledge can be fully accounted for either in terms of differences in background evidence or differences in how they weigh the evidence.[10] The standpoint epistemologist is committed to the view that even given the same body of evidence and the same background beliefs, epistemic agents are in a position to know different propositions because of the standpoint they occupy.

Here's an example that roughly illustrates and motivates the standpoint epistemologist's project. Consider the famous duck-rabbit gestalt. In this case, depending on where you direct your attention, you see either a duck or a rabbit. We can easily imagine that of two viewers who possess the same background beliefs and perceptual capacities, one might see the duck (and fail to see the rabbit) and the other might see the rabbit (and fail to see the duck). In this case, one could argue that we cannot account for why one viewer sees the rabbit (but not the duck) and the other doesn't, by appealing to differences in their background beliefs, evidence, or so on.

Furthermore, we can say that one viewer is in a position to know that the object they are seeing is a duck (where the other viewer is in a position to know that the object they are seeing is a rabbit). And though it's true that the each viewer can be primed to see what they hadn't before, the fact remains that what they are initially in a position to know differs, and that this fact arguably cannot be accounted for in terms of any differences in the epistemic features of the case.

Someone might object that in virtue of the viewers having different experiences they thereby have different evidence. But this is simply to push the question back, as we might then still ask: what accounts for the fact that the viewer has the perceptual experience that they in fact do (rather than some other perceptual experience)?

[10] Or that such explanations can fully account for the epistemic assessments an agent makes without appealing to some facts about her social identity.

Standpoint epistemology attempts to answer such questions by appealing to facts about the standpoint a person occupies. According to standpoint epistemology, we can explain why a person attends to what they do, and believes what they do, by appealing to the person's standpoint. In this sense, standpoint epistemology is an explanatory hypothesis, the goal of which is to capture a number of important features about our epistemic practices that the intellectualist simply cannot.

But appealing to standpoint epistemology as an explanation requires that we do more to spell out what a standpoint is and how standpoints influence what an epistemic agent is in a position to know. Broadly speaking, a 'standpoint' is a social position, or perspective, that one occupies and that influences how one engages with and comes to know facts about the world. Standpoints are determined by features of social identity, which include, but are not limited to, sex, gender, class, race, and so on.

Regarding the role that a standpoint plays, I propose that the standpoint epistemologist can pursue three explanations to account for how a standpoint influences what a person is in a position to know. First, the standpoint epistemologist can suggest that the difference in knowledge is accounted for in terms of the different conceptual resources associated with the standpoint an epistemic agent occupies. Second, the standpoint epistemologist can argue that which hypothesis a person entertains will be determined in part by the standpoint the person occupies. And finally, the standpoint epistemologist can argue that an epistemic agent's capacity to embed another's de se mode of presentation as her own depends on facts about the standpoint she occupies. I'll discuss these each in turn, and explore in detail how they interact to, potentially jointly, account for why Moira, but not June, is in a position to know *p*.

Explanation #3a: Conceptual Resources

The first explanation the standpoint epistemologist can pursue depends on saying the following: one's standpoint allows one to develop conceptual resources in order to make sense of the experiences of members of that standpoint. Subsequently, these resources will influence what facts an agent is in a position to know. This warrants a brief digression on the nature of conceptual resources.

According to Gaile Pohlhaus (2011), conceptual resources include language, concepts, and their associated criteria. I take it that there is a shared understanding of what is meant by language and concepts.[11] By criteria, I simply mean the features that might be used to sort objects under concepts.

To illustrate the relationship between these three conceptual resources, consider the concept of 'woman'. We can effectively use this concept and discuss it. Though there is a shared understanding of the concept 'woman', people might disagree about the criteria that are (or ought to be) used to sort people into this category. For instance, whether one must be biologically female to belong to this category might be up for dispute.

Pohlhaus writes that epistemic agents use conceptual resources as tools to understand and evaluate their experiences. Conceptual resources are not fixed and immutable, but stand open for revision. If we find that our existing resources are inadequate, then we are free to revise and reform those resources as necessary. So, for instance, we can use a concept of 'woman' that includes transwomen.

I claim that what conceptual resources an epistemic agent has will make a difference in what she is a position to know. This is the case for several reasons. First, what features of the

[11] Gaile Pohlhaus calls these epistemic resources, but I prefer 'conceptual resources' so as to avoid these resources being mistakenly identified as epistemic features.

world we notice will depend, in part, on facts about the epistemic resources we posses. Thus, if we lack the conceptual resources necessary to make sense of some aspect of the world, then we are not likely to notice that aspect.

Second, what conceptual resources we have and develop will depend on facts about our experiences. If we don't have the experience of a certain kind, then we will not (need to) develop the requisite conceptual resources for understanding that experience.

The experiences an epistemic agent has - and subsequently, the conceptual resources she will go on to develop - depend in part on features of her social identity. Since we develop conceptual resources to make sense of our experiences, and the experiences we have may depend on our social identity, then consequently, conceptual resources will differ along lines of social identity.

Thus, which conceptual resources a person is in possession of will make a difference in what she is in a position to know. This is relevant to standpoints because some standpoints - where the standpoint is determined in part by the social identity of its members – provide greater access to certain conceptual resources than do other standpoints.

As a quick illustration, working women in the 1970's, some of whom were subject to sexual harassment, occupied the same standpoint because of their shared social experiences. As a result of their shared experience of harassment, they developed the concept of 'sexual harassment' in order to make sense of, and to communicate to others, those experiences (Fricker 2007). Furthermore, because these women had a concept which their male counterparts lacked, these women were in a position to know some facts that men were not similarly placed (at the time) to know. Note that it isn't necessary for every member of the standpoint to have experienced sexual harassment in order to have the concept of 'sexual harassment'. Rather, this

is a conceptual resource that is now available to all women because *some* women were able to develop this concept.

In the same vein, the standpoint epistemologist will say that Moira's standpoint, and the resources that have been developed by members of her standpoint, place her in a position to know something that June, given her standpoint, cannot. In particular, her standpoint allows her to know that the women in this case delayed reporting because they feared they would not be believed. Of course, the intellectualist might ask what conceptual resources are available to Moira that account for why she knows, but June does not, that *p*.

I argue that just as women in the 1970s shared a standpoint because of their shared experiences of sexual harassment, black women occupy a shared standpoint because of their shared experiences of *hypersexualization*. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, for instances, writes

> Blacks have long been portrayed as more sexual, more earthy, more gratification-oriented…Thus Black women are essentially prepackaged as bad women within cultural narratives about good women who can be raped and bad women who cannot. The discrediting of Black women's claims is the consequence of a complex intersection of a gendered sexual system, one that constructs rules appropriate for good and bad women, and a race code that provides images defining the allegedly essential nature of Black women. If these sexual images form even part of the cultural imagery of Black women, then the very representation of a Black female body at least suggests certain narratives that may make Black women's rape either less believable or less important. (Crenshaw 1994: 1271)

As a black woman, Moira occupies this standpoint, and consequently, she has access to the resources black women have developed in order to understand the experience of

hypersexualization. Thus, given that she has these concepts, Moira is in a position to infer the right conclusion from the evidence.

Furthermore, as a result of her standpoint, Moira may understand that police officers benefit from a credibility excess, whereas people of color suffer from a credibility deficit. As a member of this standpoint, Moira has access to the concept of a *credibility deficit*, and is able to use this resource to understand the particular social phenomenon in question - that is, that the women were sexually assaulted and delayed reporting because they knew they would not be believed.

Let me briefly discuss why appealing to conceptual resources is not an explanation compatible with an intellectualist account. First and foremost, the features that allow Moira to know what June does not are distinctly non-epistemic. In this case, what allowed Moira to know *p* was a feature of her social identity - her race. Further, consider that in the case of sexual harassment, women were able to know what sexual harassment is, and recognize it when it occurred, because of some feature of their social identity - in this case, gender. However, features of a person's social identity need not change their evidence. So, according to the intellectualist, these are features that should not be relevant to whether an epistemic agent is in a position to know some proposition.

Furthermore, given her commitment to the view that an epistemic agent's standpoint influences what that agent is in a position to know, the standpoint epistemologist must deny both the claim that knowers are interchangeable and the claim that their reasons are equally accessible, in the senses defined earlier. We see, for instance, that Moira and June are not interchangeable in the case described above. Even given that they are in the same epistemic position, what they are in a position to know differs because of facts about their social identity

(and subsequently, facts about the standpoint they occupy). Additionally, we see that Moira knows *p* because of a stable, but contingent non-epistemic feature about her - namely, her race. And June does not know *p* precisely because she lacks this feature. Consequently, Moira's grounds for knowing what she does are not available to June. The conceptual resources that Moira has, in virtue of the standpoint she occupies, simply aren't available to June, because June occupies a different standpoint and thus has different resources.

Explanation #3b: Hypotheses

A similar, albeit distinct, explanation that the standpoint epistemologist can explore is that Moira and June entertain different hypotheses to explain why it is that the women in the Holtzclaw case delayed reporting. In turn, the hypotheses they consider are influenced by the standpoint they occupy. By 'entertain' I simply mean that for each, a different hypothesis comes to mind. I do not mean that they are aware of multiple hypotheses and entertain only the one they find most likely.

Consider an example. Jack and Jane are independently interested in determining why it is that the logic class they TA for is majority male. Jack surmises that women are under-enrolled because women are uninterested in logic. Jane supposes that the under-enrollment of women is due to the fact that there is a rumor in the department that the lecturer has engaged in inappropriate behavior with female undergraduates in the past.

Now, we can stipulate that Jack and Jane have the same evidence and background beliefs. Let's suppose they have both been informed of the rumors regarding the lecturer and of the view that some hold that women are less interested in the mathematical aspects of philosophy. But nevertheless, they entertain different hypotheses as to what best explains the low enrollment of women. Why is this?

For someone who has likely never had to carefully consider which class they are taking so as to avoid serial harassers, it's unlikely that Jack would think that the rumor involving the lecturer would have any impact on enrollment. Jane, on the other hand, as a woman in a field where this has long been a problem, might immediately realize the impact this could have on the enrollment of women. Similarly, we might think that Moira, as a black woman, is able to immediately realize why the women in the Holtzclaw case were initially uninterested in filing a report.

In both cases, I think we can explain why Moira and Jane entertain the hypotheses they do by appealing to the standpoint each occupies. We can acknowledge that June and Moira may both occupy a 'woman's' standpoint. But Moira also occupies a 'black' standpoint, and June does not. Subsequently, Moira may be better placed than is June to consider the role that race may have played in the women's decision not to report. For instance, June, as a white woman, may have never had to consider whether her race influences how others evaluate her. Moira, on the other hand, as a black woman, may have had to consider how her racial identity impacts how seriously she is taken by others.

As should be evident, this is closely related to the explanation regarding conceptual resources. I suggest that the conceptual resources available to an epistemic agent because of her standpoint likely influence which hypotheses she entertains. As I noted previously, Moira, but not June, may possess the concept of a credibility deficit, because she has likely suffered this. Consequently, this might inform which hypothesis she considers. By extension, since it's unlikely that June possesses this concept (because as a white woman she may have never had this experience) she might fail to entertain this hypothesis when considering what best explains the women's delayed reporting.

Explanation #3c: De Se Knowledge

In the discussion above, I suggested that what an epistemic agent is in a position to know can be influenced by her standpoint. I further argued that standpoints influence which conceptual resources an epistemic agent is able to make use of, and which hypotheses she may consider. In the discussion of both these explanations, I noted that our conceptual resources, and the hypotheses we entertain, may be impacted by the experiences we have. This brings me to the final explanation the standpoint epistemologist might offer: *de se* knowledge.

I argue here that de se knowledge can be used as a tool to 'imaginatively grasp' the first-personal perspective of another epistemic agent. *De se* knowledge is personal knowledge that one expresses or grasps using first-personal concepts, e.g. 'I', 'me', 'mine', and so on (Ninan 2010). My argument that de se knowledge can be used to explain why some knowers are in a position to know *p,* where others are not, proceeds in three stages. First, I argue that epistemic agents are able to first-personally grasp the first-personal perspective of other agents, such that they can know what those agents know. This involves the epistemic agent possessing an 'imaginative capacity' that allows her to 'imaginatively grasp' another's first-personal perspective. Second, I argue that this 'imaginative capacity' is more difficult the greater the social distance between epistemic agents. Finally, I conclude by exploring how this explanation applies to the case of *Black Subject/White Subject* described above.

Appealing to an argument advanced by Laurie Paul, I argue that epistemic agents use a de se mode of presentation to imaginatively represent the experiences of others. Paul writes that this 'imaginative capacity', what she calls 'empathy', goes beyond merely allowing yourself to 'feel what another feels', or simply 'imagining yourself in their shoes'. Rather, it involves performing

a cognitive act that "allows you to first personally represent some element of another's experience" (Paul 2016: 198).

Paul argues that when we engage in this imaginative capacity, we need a mode of presentation that allows us to embed another's mode of presentation into our own, such that *we* first-personally grasp that person's first-personal perspective. To do so, we must engage in a subjective mode of presentation, what Paul calls the 'de se mode of presentation'. This mode of presentation allows us to imaginatively grasp another's de se mode of presentation as our own. That is, this mode of presentation allows us to subjectively represent some element of that person's experience and to draw on what is learned. This is to go beyond merely imagining what it must be like to have some experience. Rather, it requires that we imagine what it is like to *be that person* having the experience.[12]

Returning to the cases above, this means that June cannot simply imagine what it might have been like to be sexually assaulted by a cop. Instead, she must imagine what it must have been like, *as those women*, to have been assaulted by a cop. However, I submit that this is more difficult for June, than for Moira, since there is a greater social distance between June and the alleged victims than between Moira and the alleged victims.

Let me say what I mean by 'social distance'. Social distance, in contrast to locational distance, describes the distance between groups of society. To illustrate, June and Moira are not socially distant in terms of gender, but are socially distant in terms of race. One charge that has been levied against using empathy as tool of moral reasoning, by Paul Bloom (2016) and Jesse Prinz (2011), among others, is that our capacity to empathize with another person varies as a

[12] This perhaps sounds similar to simulation theory in the philosophy of mind. Victoria Pitts-Taylor (2013) has done interesting and important work exploring the intersections of simulation theory and feminist epistemology, developing what she calls 'embodied simulation theory'.

function of social distance. Paul herself notes this, writing that "to have the capacity for empathy seems to require a certain amount of shared experience" (Paul 2016: 199).

Extending this, I suggest that the greater the social distance between two people, the more difficult it will be for one to engage in the de se mode of presentation in order to represent the other's experience. In turn, the less socially distant two people are, the more easily they will find it to 'imaginatively grasp' the other's perspective. As Paul also writes, "the empathetic task involves grasping some relevant feature of another person's first personal perspective" (ibid). If the epistemic agent is unable to imaginatively grasp the relevant feature, then I argue she will also be unable to accurately represent the other person's first personal perspective.

The intellectualist might object that given the pervasiveness of bias in applications of empathy, we ought to rule it out as an epistemic tool. But it is precisely for this reason that I think empathy is epistemically significant. Because we are better able to 'imaginatively grasp' the perspectives of those who are most like us, this explains why some epistemic agents are better placed than others to know certain propositions. Others have noted that in moral judgments, empathy plays a crucial epistemic role in determining when (and whether) moral (dis)approbation is warranted. I think it is not implausible to imagine that it plays a significant role in epistemic evaluations, as well.

However, empathy should not be considered a distinctively epistemic feature. As such, the intellectualist cannot explain its role in epistemic evaluations. Consider that empathy is not evidence, nor is it a background belief. It is simply a capacity. As Paul writes, when one engages the de se mode of presentation, she does not learn new information so much as she gains a new ability.[13]

[13] The traditional epistemologist might object, here, that differential capacities allow for differences in evidence. For instance, those with functioning visual perceptual systems are in a position to gather more evidence than those with

Let me now extend the argument considered thus far to the case of June and Moira. It's plausible that June can imaginatively conceive of what it must be like to be a woman at the center of the Holtzclaw controversy. But as she is not black, and has no lived experience as of being black, I argue it will be more difficult to conceive of what it must be like to be a *black woman* at the center of the Holtzclaw controversy. Furthermore, while June, when she imagines herself as the women in the Holtzclaw case, might think she is representing their experience, her representation likely fails to build in the blackness of the experiencer. This is especially likely given that 'whiteness' is regarded as racially neutral, which means that she may fail to see the salience of race in her own experiences, and thus fail to build a racial dimension into such representations. Consequently, I suggest it will be more difficult for June (than for Moira) to imaginatively grasp why the women may have acted as they did.

Moira, as a black woman herself, will have little trouble 'building in blackness' into her representation. Given her lived experiences as a black woman, Moira can more easily imagine herself as the victim in the Holtzclaw case, and from that perspective, she can infer, and come to know, the most likely explanation for why the women delayed reporting.

This explanation may work in tandem with the two previously considered to explain why Moira, but not June, is in a position to know that *p*. I suggest that which hypothesis an epistemic agent entertains will depend on her conceptual resources, and which conceptual resources she has will depend on how capable she is of taking on the perspective in question (where this will depend on the social identity of the agent and of the perspective she is trying to imaginatively grasp).

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faulty visual perceptual systems. However, this is not analogous to *Black Subject/White Subject*. We must still provide an explanation that accounts for why social identity makes a difference in one's ability to acquire or utilize some capacity, as it does in the case I have outlined here.

When Moira first-personally grasps the first-personal perspective of Holtzclaw's victims, she is able to know those women and their experiences. Furthermore, as a black woman herself, she is able to utilize the conceptual resources developed by black women to understand their shared social experiences. It is because Moira is black and she can, more effectively than could June, engage in this perspective-taking, that she is able to imagine the kinds of experiences black women are likely to suffer. Consequently, she is better placed to develop the conceptual resources necessary to understand these experiences, and then arrive at the hypothesis that she does. As a black woman, Moira can know (where June cannot) that other black women might not report for fear of being believed. She can know this because she can know why *she* might not have reported, had she been the victim. Consequently, she can know that in the Holtzclaw case, the victims delayed reporting for the same reason.

4. Concluding Remarks

The standpoint epistemologist argues that there are numerous cases like *Black Subject* and *White Subject*. Just as race played a role in *Black Subject* and *White Subject,* standpoint epistemologists further argue that other features of one's social identity, like one's gender or class, may make a difference in what an epistemic agent is in a position to know.

The task of the standpoint epistemologist is to a provide a theoretical framework that explains why features of our social identity play a role in determining what propositions an epistemic agent is in a position to know. I've gestured at a few possible responses the standpoint epistemologist might offer here. I have not, however, specified what a standpoint consists in, nor have I considered how a standpoint arises. Further work may examine how standpoints, in particular dominant and marginal social positions, are largely constituted by these features that, though non-epistemic, make a critical difference to knowledge. My task here has merely been to

demonstrate what is at the heart of the tension between standpoint epistemology and one characterization of traditional epistemology, and to motivate the standpoint epistemologist's argument.

I have argued that intellectualism is comprised of two components - the atomistic view of knowers and aperspectivalism - that the standpoint epistemologist (and others in this family) is right to reject. I have further shown that where the intellectualist will fail to adequately explain such cases as *Black Subject/White Subject*, the standpoint epistemologist is well-poised to offer an explanation. Namely, the standpoint epistemologist's explanation relies on arguing that features of our social identity make a difference in what an epistemic agent is in a position to know, and this may be the case for several reasons. I have suggested that the conceptual resources we develop, the hypotheses we entertain, and our capacity to embed another's de se mode of presentation as our own, will all make a difference in what we are in a position to know. I have further suggested that these explanations are not compatible with the intellectualist position.

Traditional epistemology, as I have interpreted it, operates from the assumption of an idealized rational framework and conceives of knowers in "abstraction from relations of social power" (Fricker 2007: 3), and obscures questions that arise when we conceive of the knower as socially situated. As Pohlhaus also notes, 'the dominantly recognized concept of the 'generic knower' is not only an epistemic resource that focuses attention on particular aspects of the world experienced from a dominant position, but it is also a concept that *hides that fact*" (Pohlhaus 2011: 720, italics mine). Knowledge claims, whether or not they ought to be, are importantly tied to our social situatedness. In overlooking how our epistemic practices are *in fact*

employed, traditional epistemology fails to address the inadequacies that emerge as the result of our existing epistemic framework.

Standpoint epistemology, which accounts for the influence of one's social location on one's knowledge claims, is therefore essential to our conceptualization of epistemic oppression. Standpoint epistemology, as I have interpreted it here, is particularly helpful in revealing epistemic oppression because it makes explicit the underlying assumptions of some characterizations of traditional epistemology. Thus, our understanding of epistemic oppression – and perhaps of knowledge-acquisition more broadly – is impoverished without the theoretical framework standpoint epistemology provides. I do not take myself to be arguing here that standpoint epistemology ought to supplant traditional epistemology. Rather, I mean to suggest that we need to broaden our conception of epistemology altogether - that is to say, we need to bring standpoint epistemology out of the margins and into the mainstream. If traditional epistemology is to do justice to each of us in our capacities as knowers, then it must be open to the lessons of standpoint epistemology.

Chapter Three: From Standpoint Epistemology to Epistemic Oppression

The landscape of epistemology is changing. Epistemologists are no longer solely concerned with questions regarding what conditions are necessary for knowledge or how knowledge is transmitted; they have instead shifted their attention to concerns regarding our epistemic practices and how those practices oppress. Epistemic oppression, the unwarranted exclusion or obstruction of certain epistemic agents from the practices of knowledge production, has been the focus of much work produced by feminist epistemologists in the last decade, and rightly so. If the aim of epistemology is to bring us closer to truth, then any practice which subverts this aim ought to be thoroughly investigated.[14] However, as I will argue, our capacity to root out epistemic oppression is limited to the extent that we continue operating within the traditional epistemological framework. If, as I will suggest, epistemic oppression has its origins in epistemology as traditionally conceived, then we cannot hope to find a solution there. In this paper, I will argue that in order to understand, address, and eliminate epistemic oppression, we must appeal to the conceptual tools made available by standpoint epistemology.

Standpoint epistemology is committed to the thesis that some non-epistemic features make a difference to what an epistemic agent is in a position to know. Precisely which non-epistemic features are of concern, and the way in which those features make a difference to what a person knows, is what I aim to explore further in this paper.

The standpoint thesis is important but controversial. It owes its controversial nature to the fact that it stands in tension with those versions of traditional epistemology that suggest that it's exclusively epistemic features (such as truth, evidence, reliability, and so on) that make a difference to what a person is in a position to know. And, as I have already alluded, it is an

[14] For interpretations and defenses of the dictum that 'belief aims at truth', see Railton (1994) and Velleman (2015).

important thesis because it sheds light on a phenomenon that emerges in our epistemic practices: epistemic oppression.

In order to make clear the role standpoint epistemology plays in illuminating this phenomenon, we must first do some important work to clarify the landscape. The thesis of standpoint epistemology has been characterized in a number of diverse (and sometimes, conflicting) ways. And so, to better understand epistemic oppression, we must first be clear about the thesis under discussion. My goal here is to carve out the conceptual space so we have a clearer sense of what standpoint epistemology is, how it is to be defended, and to what ends it can be applied.

I begin in section 1 by analyzing what I take to be the bare, or general, standpoint thesis. I next explore how we can fill in this bare reading to offer additional versions of the thesis. In section 2 I examine the historical material and material feminist readings, offered by George Lukács and Nancy Hartsock, respectively. In section 3 I develop an epistemic reading, gestured at by Miranda Fricker and Gaile Pohlhaus, among others. Then, in section 4 I analyze how these readings can be usefully applied to illuminate some (though not all) well-known forms of epistemic oppression. I conclude in section 5 by offering an analysis of why traditional epistemology falls short in illuminating this phenomenon.

1. A Starting Point

I interpret standpoint epistemology as one member of a family of views that hold that some non-epistemic features make a difference to what an epistemic agent is in a position to know. In particular, standpoint epistemologists argue that what an epistemic agent is in a position to know, and what knowledge she is in a position to share with others, is sensitive to non-epistemic features related to the agent's social identity. Standpoint epistemologists differ with regards to

which features of an epistemic agent's social identity they take to be epistemically significant. As such, I will begin here by sketching the general commitments that I take all standpoint theorists to share, before narrowing in on specific iterations of the view.

I argue that the general version of the standpoint thesis might be understood as follows:

(S) For certain propositions *p*, whether S is in a position to know that *p* depends on some non-epistemic social facts about S.

The general thesis does not specify which non-epistemic social facts make a difference to what S, the epistemic agent, is in a position to know. However, of primary concern to the standpoint epistemologist is the relationship between one's position of marginalization or dominance in a social system and what one can know (or fail to know) given that social positioning. The more rarified versions of the standpoint thesis spell this out in more detail. For now, it's important to understand what the general thesis means.

First, it's worth noting that standpoint epistemologists restrict their claim to the social domain. Thus, when I speak of 'certain propositions', I mean certain social propositions. Characterizing the social domain is difficult, but propositions regarding the oppression of members of marginalized groups are paradigmatic of the sort I have in mind here when I speak of the social domain.

Next, we should unpack what it means to say that 'S is in a position to know that *p*'. There is a sense in which it's trivial that certain non-epistemic features make a difference to what we are in a position to know. To illustrate, the fact that I am seated in the front of the classroom means that I am in a position to know that the speaker is to my left, that the chalkboard is directly in front of me, and that there are several colleagues seated to my right. But were I to turn around, I would also be in a position to know that there is a phone hanging on the back wall, that

there is a clock in the back-center of the room, or precisely how many other attendees are seated behind me. The place that I am sitting is a non-epistemic fact and it makes a difference to what I am in a position to know.

But I mean something more than this here. I mean to defend the claim that certain non-epistemic facts related to one's social identity make a difference to what we are in a position to know. For instance, one's social identity may make a difference to what evidence one has, whether one recognizes evidence as such, what claims one entertains, and so on.[15] To the extent that social identity changes evidence, it's different than the way in which changing one's seat changes one's evidence. It's not merely a difference in degree, rather, social identity 'opens one up' to evidence in ways that aren't modeled by the traditional epistemologist. And it is this sense in which one's social identity, a non-epistemic feature, makes a difference to what one is in a position to know. Or so I hope to show.

Finally, let me note the distinction between epistemic and non-epistemic features, and the role this distinction plays in the debate between standpoint epistemologists and traditional epistemologists. While I do not have a precise definition of when a feature is epistemic, traditional epistemologists take epistemic features to be those features that are truth-conducive - that is, features that make a belief more likely to be true. Paradigmatic examples give us a strong grasp of this category of features: examples include evidence, justification, truth, reliability, and so on.

By contrast, standpoint epistemologists stipulate that features beyond these, features that are traditionally taken not to be truth-conducive, may make a difference to whether an epistemic

[15] Unlike in the example above, one cannot simply alter one's social identity (in the same way one can change one's spatial location) within a social system and thereby change what one is in a position to know.

agent knows some proposition or not. In this respect, standpoint epistemology shares a number of features with views like pragmatic encroachment (Stanley 2005).

Consider, by way of comparison, pragmatic encroachment, the view that practical facts make a difference to what an epistemic agent knows. According to traditional epistemologists, practical facts neither make a belief more or less likely to be true. However, pragmatic encroachers have offered strong intuitive reasons for thinking that such facts make it more or less difficult for a person to know some proposition. Thus, the pragmatic encroacher argues that some non-epistemic features (the practical facts) make a difference to what a person knows.

In a similar spirit, we might interpret the standpoint epistemologist as arguing that certain non-epistemic features related to one's social situatedness make it more or less difficult to know some propositions in the social domain. For example, the standpoint epistemologists might argue that is easier for women, who are disproportionately more likely to experience workplace harassment than their male colleagues, to recognize such harassment when it occurs. Or, at least, this is the sort of claim I hope to motivate here.

(i) Additional Commitments

What I have described above might be properly referred to as the *situated knowledge thesis*. This thesis is one of a cluster of claims to which the standpoint epistemologist is committed. But accounts disagree about which facets of one's situatedness make such a difference. It is this distinction I will explore further in the next sections. For now, there are two other theses worth noting that are central to the standpoint epistemologist: the epistemic privilege thesis and the achievement thesis.

The epistemic privilege thesis is the idea that some 'epistemic advantage' can be drawn from the position of marginalization. In other words, this thesis suggests that such positions

allow for better, more accurate knowledge. Elsewhere, I have argued that the best interpretation of this thesis has us understand it as the claim that some epistemic agents who are positioned in a certain way have some epistemic advantages such that they are more likely to form true beliefs. In order to defend the epistemic privilege thesis, the standpoint theorist must offer an account of how such an epistemic advantage is achieved.

In defense of epistemic privilege, standpoint epistemologists have examined the role that vulnerability within a social system plays in producing a dual perception of that system. Following W.E.B. Du Bois (1903), standpoint epistemologists cash this out out in terms of double consciousness, which they interpret as the view that those who are socially marginalized possess the ability to see things both from the perspective of the dominant and from the perspective of the oppressed (Smith 1974; Collins 1990; Haraway 1991). Alison Wylie, following Patricia Hill Collins (1986), expresses this as the idea of an 'outsider-within', writing that the socially marginalized knower is

> …An "insider-outsider" who has no choice, given her social location, but to negotiate the world of the privileged, a knower who must understand accurately and in detail the knowledge that constitutes a dominant, normative worldview at the same time as she is grounded in a community whose marginal status generates a fundamentally different understanding of how the world works." (Wylie 2003: 34-35)

This 'outsider-within' status allows for marginalized knowers to comparatively evaluate both perspectives, and so engenders a more robust view of social relations. Dominantly situated knowers, by contrast, because they are not vulnerable to those whom they oppress, are under no comparable burden to consider the worldview of the oppressed. Consequently, "in systems of domination the vision available to the rulers will be both partial and perverse" (Hartsock 1983:

285), whereas the vision available to the oppressed will reflect dual perspectives and thus be more comprehensive and accurate.

Moreover, theorists suggest that epistemic privilege is conferred upon marginalized knowers because they have no interest in remaining ignorant of the conditions that allow for their oppression (Alcoff 2007; Mills 2007). Consequently, marginalized knowers are motivated to see the world clearly. Conversely, dominantly situated knowers do have some interest in remaining ignorant of the social conditions that allow for their dominant social positioning (Frye 1983; Tuana 2004). Thus, one might argue that because we represent the world, and states of affairs, in terms of our interests, that dominantly situated knowers are obstructed from seeing the state of affairs as being unjust.

However, it is worth noting that it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition that one be a member of a marginalized group in order to claim epistemic privilege. It is not a sufficient condition because one may be marginalized but unaware of the significance of their marginalized status. And it is not necessary because one can gain access to the privileged perspective provided that one 'starts thought from marginalized lives'[16]. In either case, what is required in order to gain epistemic privilege is that one becomes aware of one's social positioning and come to the understanding that the predicament they are in is a result of that social positioning. This is the function of consciousness-raising. As such, let me turn now to the achievement thesis, which explores the relationship between epistemic privilege and consciousness-raising in more detail.

[16] Sandra Harding attributes this formulation to Dorothy Smith, who wrote of the value of thinking about a social situation from the perspective of Native Canadians. See Sandra Harding's "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is 'Strong Objectivity'?" in *Feminist Epistemologies,* ed. L. Alcoff and E. Potter [New York/London: Routledge, 1993], note 30).

The achievement thesis functions to offer an account both of how a standpoint is achieved and how access is gained to its situated knowledge. The project of consciousness-raising serves both functions. Consciousness-raising involves the process of becoming conscious of one's role in a particular social system and the features of one's social situation that enable them to occupy that role. As Catherine MacKinnon writes, consciousness-raising involves a group's "[seeing] their group identity as a systematic necessity that benefits another group" (MacKinnon 1991: 86). By way of illustration, in a patriarchal system, women serve the role of bearing children, caring for the elderly, and other such nurturing roles. The feature of their social situation that enables them to serve in this capacity is their being designated women, but also their being women within a patriarchal system that restricts women to (only) these roles.

Consciousness-raising functions so as to help members of an oppressed group (women, in the case I outlined above) become aware of their group identity in order to achieve a shared understanding of their predicament. Shelia Ruth, examining the role of consciousness-raising in the women's liberation movement, writes, "…consciousness refers to awareness, to a profound sensitivity and comprehension of the conditions of women's lives - social, political, economic, psychological and more" (Ruth 1973: 291-292). The project of consciousness-raising, then, requires critically examining the relationship between one's social situatedness and one's oppression (or oppressive role) within a social system.

A standpoint emerges through the practice of consciousness-raising. For instance, a women's standpoint develops when women have developed a critical consciousness about the nature of their oppression as women. This standpoint is not something one occupies in virtue of occupying a particular social location or perspective; rather, it must be struggled for. To illustrate, a woman does not occupy a woman's standpoint merely in virtue of being a woman;

rather, she occupies this standpoint because she has engaged in the process of consciousness-raising.

Once a standpoint emerges, knowledge is made available from this standpoint. Borrowing language from Peter Railton, I propose that we think of a standpoint as a *frame* through which we engage with, and come to know facts about, the world. As Railton writes

> "Such framing is a matter of the expectations one brings to situations, the features of situations one tends to notice or ignore, the spontaneous interpretations of events one is primed to make, the possibilities for thought and action that come immediately to mind, and so on….They limit the otherwise unbounded and undelimited character of experience and restrict one's scope of attention—not because one sees the frame, but because what one sees is seen through it." (Railton 2006: 18)

When an epistemic agent moves from seeing the world through the frame of the dominant, and shifts to seeing the world through the frame of the oppressed, she comes to have a new body of knowledge. Further, this knowledge is made available to anyone who occupies the standpoint. Again, this is not restricted to those who share the social perspective or location of the standpoint (e.g., women) but is available to those who engage in consciousness-raising regarding that standpoint (so men who have engaged in consciousness-raising can see through the frame of a women's standpoint).[17]

While standpoint epistemologists differ with respect to the situated knowledge thesis (that is, they differ with respect to which aspect of our social lives makes an epistemic difference), they generally agree that a standpoint, and the knowledge generated by that

[17] Alternatively, one could think of the frame of those who are dominantly-situated as a frame that is distorting. Consciousness-raising is the process of this distorting frame being lifted and in so doing, making clear the scope of social relations.

standpoint, is not given but is achieved. Thus, I will largely focus my efforts in the next sections on exploring how accounts of standpoint theory differ with regards to the first thesis.

I begin in section two by exploring the historical material and material feminist accounts, which focus their attention on the relationship between knowledge and labor.

2. Material Readings

Standpoint epistemology can trace its genesis to the works of Karl Marx (1976/1867) and Friedrich Engels (2001/1932), George Lukács (1971/1923), and their analyses of the proletarian standpoint. The non-epistemic feature of significance in their analysis is that of material labor. Thus, I render this reading of (S) as follows:

> (S_M) For certain propositions *p*, whether S is in a position to know that *p* depends on S's relationship to material labor.

This reading is general enough to capture both the historical-material reading and the material feminist reading it inspired. I'll begin here first by tracing the development of the historical material reading and then move to the material feminist account.

It's worth mentioning that these particular versions of the thesis have largely fallen out of fashion. But I will show, in section 4, that the material accounts, particularly the material feminist reading, are especially helpful in unearthing some new species of epistemic oppression of interest to scholars today. In particular, I'll suggest the material feminist account helps us better understand what Nora Berenstain (2016) calls epistemic exploitation - a form of epistemic oppression which demands that women and people of color engage in unpaid (and unrecognized) labor in order to educate their oppressors about the nature of their oppression - and other forms of cognitive and emotional labor expected of members oppressed groups.

2.1 The Historical Material Account

The historical material account of standpoint epistemology is so named because it is grounded in historical materialism - the view according to which the material conditions of a society's mode of production fundamentally determine its organization and development. This account explores how one's relationship to a society's mode of production makes a difference to what one is in a position to know.

The mode of production of interest under the historical-material account is that of capitalism. Capitalism is a mode of production in which "the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities" (Marx and Engels 2001/1932: 764). Under capitalism, the laborer himself becomes a commodity because his labor is sold to others, and is done so at a low price. Thus, we might think of capitalism, as Gayle Rubin defines it, as "a set of social relations…in which production takes the form of turning money, things, and people into capital" (Rubin 1975: 161).

Of specific interest to historical material accounts is how the social relations of capitalist society are reproduced. As Marx writes in *Capital*, "The capitalist process of production…produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capitalist relation itself; on the one hand the capitalist, on the other the wage-labourer" (Marx 1976/1867: 724). This particular set of social relations is structured such that the capitalist class, or bourgeoisie, profits from the surplus value of what the laborer, or proletariat, class produces. Surplus value is the difference between the wage that is paid to the laborer and what the products of his labor earn on the market. Thus, the goal of capitalism is achieved when the total value of what the laborer has produced exceeds the value of his wage.

Historical material accounts of standpoint epistemology suggest that one's class position within a capitalist system - that is, whether one is a member of the capitalist or the laboring class - is relevant to what one is in a position to know. As Hartsock writes, "material life (class position in Marxist theory) not only structures but sets limits on the understanding of social relations", such that one's relationship to labor can be expected to have consequences for knowledge (Hartsock 1983: 286).

In particular, historical material accounts investigate how one's knowledge of the mode of production is sensitive to one's class position. The laborer class will represent the world in terms of use-value - that is, they represent the value of what they produce in terms of the ends towards which it can be applied. The capitalist class, by contrast, will represent the world in terms of exchange-value - what a product is worth in the market. Thus, where the capitalist class will value exchange over use, the laborer, because of his involvement in production (and because he is alienated from the value of what he produces on the market), will value use over exchange.

This will impact how each class views the material conditions of its society. The capitalist class will view the material conditions of society as being basically equal, and will represent the sale and purchase of labor as a contract between free agents. Further, the capitalist class will represent the conditions necessary for capitalism as natural, and therefore necessary. Thus, they will view the exploitation of the laboring class as a natural and necessary component of capitalism.

It is only by taking on the point of view of the laborer that one can "uncover the process by which surplus value is produced and appropriated by the capitalist, and the means by which the worker is systematically disadvantaged" (Hartsock 1983: 287). This is achieved via consciousness-raising among the laborer class, which begins with "the self-knowledge of its own

social situation and with the elucidation of its necessity (i.e. its genesis)" (Lukács 1971/1923: 159). That is, laborers come to have an accurate understanding of their role within the capitalist system provided that they understand that 1) surplus value is created as a result of the exploitation of their labor and 2) the goal of capitalism is to reproduce and maintain this labor.

To the extent that class-consciousness is achieved, the historical-materialist claims epistemic privilege over questions of economics and history on behalf of the laborer class. As Lukács wrote, "Bourgeois thought judges social phenomena consciously or unconsciously, naively or subtly, consistently from the standpoint of the individual" (Lukács 1971/1923: 28). But, for the laborer class, "its class situation becomes comprehensible only if the whole of society can be understood" (Lukács 1971/1923: 20). Thus, the development of the laborer standpoint provides a vantage point from which they are able to survey the whole of society.

These are the general characteristics and commitments of the historical-material account. Material feminists, taking this as a guide, argue that the gendered division of labor makes way for a specifically feminist standpoint.

2.2 The Material Feminist Account

Like the historical material reading of the standpoint thesis, the material feminist version explores the relationship between labor and knowledge. But unlike the historical material account, the material feminist account explores the unique forms of labor in which women find themselves primarily engaged. Thus, this account explores the gendered division of labor and the manner in which this impacts the different bodies of knowledge men and women have.

Where the historical material account explores the role of the proletariat in the reproduction of capital, the material feminist account examines the role of women in the reproduction of labor - that is, the reproduction of workers. This account investigates those

activities that lead to this reproduction - housework, childbearing, and so on. Thus, while the mode of production of interest to the historical-materialist is capitalism, the mode of production of interest to the material feminist is patriarchy.

According to material feminists (Smith 1974; Hartsock 1983; Jaggar 1983; Harding 1991) the gendered division of labor forms the basis for a specifically feminist standpoint. The institutionalized division of labor under patriarchy structures social relations and thereby structures our understanding of those social relations.

Many material feminists focus on the dual contribution of women to capitalism - their contribution to subsistence and their contribution to childbearing. First, women participate in the reproduction of labor power by turning commodities into consumable goods - the production of food, clothing, and other such tasks (Rubin 1975). Second, women are central in reproduction (Hartsock 1983). Thus, women literally produce a commodity in that they have children who will go on to become a part of the workforce. Ultimately, because women are not paid wages for these tasks (which are necessary for capitalism), this labor contributes to the production of surplus value.

Of course, in addition to this, many women also engage in paid labor. Thus, we see that women are subject to a 'double shift' of labor - working for wages outside of the home and then performing a second, unpaid shift, at home (Hochschild and Machung 1989).

Those who defend the material feminist accounts claim an epistemic vantage point on male supremacy (Hartsock 1983). Material feminists argue that because social relations are structured in such a way that women are responsible for caring for everyone's needs, women are better able to see the ways in which patriarchy fails to meet these needs. Men, because they are

not similarly responsible and do not engage in these forms of labor, are at an epistemic disadvantage.

This account thus functions as an analogue to the historical material account. While historical-materialism suggests that laborers are epistemically privileged with respect to capitalist relations, material feminism holds that women's role as reproductive laborers confers a better vantage point on patriarchy than that had by men. In particular, women are able to see, where men are not, the exploitation of women as "unpaid reproducers of the labor force and as a sex-segregated labor force available for low wages" (Hartsock 1983: 303). Furthermore, women can see that "women's work is defined as inferior work, and inferior work is defined as work for women" (MacKinnon 1991: 92).

Of course, this epistemic privilege is only achieved provided that women have engaged in the project of consciousness-raising. Consciousness-raising involves women becoming conscious of the fact that there is a social reality they share in virtue of being designated 'women', that the standard for womanhood is one women did not create, and that men benefit from the very social arrangements by which women are deprived (MacKinnon 1991). So, material feminism claims an epistemic vantage point not qua women, but qua material feminist (those who have engaged in the consciousness-raising project).[18]

The material-feminist account, as I have outlined it here, focuses on the contributions of women to capitalist patriarchy. It therefore focuses on the extent to which women's labor, which is often unpaid and unrecognized, contributes to the goal of capitalism. But, women engage in specifically gendered labor beyond contributing to the production of surplus value. I turn now to labor which is under-discussed in material feminist literature.

[18] To be clear, this means that women are not epistemically privileged with respect to the patriarchy merely in virtue of being women. Rather, epistemic privilege is conferred in virtue of consciousness-raising. This relates to the point earlier - one can start thought from marginalized lives even if one does not occupy a marginalized social position.

2.3 Beyond Reproductive Labor

While material feminist accounts focus on the exploitation of women under capitalist patriarchy, and thus explore their contribution to sustaining capitalism, we need not restrict our investigation to only those forms of labor that involve the reproduction of capital. A robust account of material feminist should also look at those forms of labor that are distinctly coded as feminine. I suggest here that emotional and cognitive labor, performed disproportionately by women and people of color, are within the purview of material feminism.[19]

Mirjam Müller (2018) defines emotional labor as a form of gender-specific exploitation that involves

> …listening to the other's worries, sensing that something is going on and providing space for the other to talk about it, keeping in touch, remembering important things in the other's life etc. The currency of this type of emotional labour includes care, respect, attention, affection or empathy. (Müller 2018: 8)[20]

This form of labor is one which is unevenly distributed among the genders and which women perform to a disproportionate degree. In part, Müller argues, this is because of gendered assumptions which view women as suited to these tasks because they are nurturing by nature.

Kate Manne (2018) also explores the unequal division of emotional labor along the lines of gender. Manne argues that because goods like "attention, affection, admiration, sympathy, sex, and children (i.e., social, domestic, reproductive, and emotional labor); also mixed goods, such as safe haven, nurture, security, soothing, and comfort" are distinctively coded as feminine, women are viewed as obligated to provide these goods to men, and men see themselves as entitled to these goods as provided by women (Manne 2018: 130).

[19] One could, of course, argue that these forms of labor do make the reproduction of labor possible.
[20] See also Arlie Hochschild (1985).

Beyond emotional labor, women also find themselves beholden to performing cognitive labor. Cognitive labor includes the invisible mental work that involves organizing, keeping track of, and delegating tasks that need to accomplished in order to manage one's household, office, and so on (Walzer 1996). Cognitive labor thus includes tasks like noticing you're low on toilet paper, that the kids have upcoming doctor's appointments, that laundry needs to be done in preparation for a trip, and other such errands. While men increasingly perform these tasks, it is still the case that women are expected to keep mental track of what has to be done and thus are responsible for delegating.

As both Müller and Manne note, women are adversely impacted by the expectation that they perform this kind of labor. For instance, in academia, women researchers are disproportionately asked to advise students, engage in additional service requirements (like serving on committees), and provide support for male colleagues (Guarino and Borden 2017; El-Alayli, Hansen-Brown, Ceynar 2018). This impedes their career advancement because they have less free time than do their male counterparts (Müller 2018: 9). Further, women are punished when they fail to provide these services to which others believe they are entitled (Manne 2018: 111).

Material feminist accounts of the standpoint thesis must take into account these forms of labor. These forms of labor are demanded of women and people of color under the white-supremacist patriarchy, which views dominantly-situated agents as entitled to the emotional and cognitive labor that marginalized agents provide. These forms of labor are, in many cases, prior to the reproduction of labor that material-feminists investigate, such as housework. That is to say, women are able to contribute to these systems of reproduction by first participating in the emotional and cognitive labor necessary for these systems to operate.

These forms of labor also result in different bodies of knowledge, given that the labor is divided around gender. Women, for instance, are better positioned than are men to know what it takes to make a household run smoothly, primarily because they are the ones attending to those tasks in the home.

Much of what I said about consciousness-raising and epistemic privilege on the material feminist account applies here. Regarding epistemic privilege, I suggest that material-feminist accounts widen their scope to include privilege, not just over male supremacy, but over the white-supremacist patriarchy that allows for white male supremacy, in particular. That is, material-feminist accounts of standpoint are better positioned to examine the ways in which male supremacy and white supremacy are mutually reinforcing systems of oppression.

Consciousness-raising must, then, involve examining how and why this labor has not been designated as labor. As MacKinnon suggests, this will entail recognizing that this labor has been marked as inferior because it is labor designated for women and people of color. Still further, it involves the realization that this is labor which is necessary in order to sustain the white-supremacist (or white capitalist) patriarchy.

Though material accounts of standpoint epistemology are useful as we think about our lives as they are structured around labor, this is but one facet of the human experience. The narrow focus of these accounts prevent us from considering broader elements of our social experiences, outside and beyond work, that might also impact what we know. As such, I will now take up the epistemic reading of standpoint epistemology, which explores the relationship between knowledge and one's social experiences.

3. An Epistemic Reading

Beyond exploring the impact of labor relations on knowledge, some feminist epistemologists (Anderson 1995; Fricker 1999; Pohlhaus 2011; Dotson 2012) are also concerned with the more general social conditions and relations in which epistemic agents are situated. Other accounts of standpoint epistemology should focus more broadly, then, on the social experiences that socially marginalized knowers or groups have in virtue of their position of marginalization.

Gaile Pohlhaus (2011) has argued that marginalized groups develop a body of conceptual resources so as to understand the experiences they have in virtue of their marginalization.[21] As such, I will cash this reading of the standpoint thesis out in terms of the conceptual resources one develops and utilizes as a result of the social position she occupies:

(S_E) For certain propositions *p*, whether S is in a position to know that *p* depends on the conceptual resources possessed by S.

This reading is meant to capture the epistemic version of the general standpoint thesis. Before I explore how a standpoint emerges on this account, first let me say a bit about conceptual resources.

3.1 Conceptual Resources

Gaile Pohlhaus writes that these resources are tools epistemic agents use for understanding and evaluating their experiences. These resources include language, concepts and their associated criteria for sorting. Importantly, these resources "*do not* stand independently of *experience*" (Pohlhaus 2011: 718, italics Pohlhaus's). Rather, as epistemic agents, we employ these resources to make sense of our experiences, and when our conceptual resources are inadequate to that task,

[21] Pohlhaus refers to these as epistemic resources, but I will refer to these as conceptual resources so as to avoid the implication that these resources are epistemic features.

we reform and revise those resources as necessary. Thus, conceptual resources are not stagnant but are subject to change as epistemic agents see fit.

Conceptual resources play an important epistemic role in directing our attention, in organizing our thought, and in structuring our reasoning. As such I will argue that these resources have important consequences for knowledge. This is especially so if, as I will show, the conceptual resources an epistemic agent has depend, in some cases, on her social experiences. To defend this claim, I turn now to work from Miranda Fricker on epistemic injustice.

Fricker has argued that epistemic agents are marginalized when they are excluded from meaning-generating, or interpretative, practices. A meaning-generating practice is one that guides, shapes, or governs our way of thinking about things (what some would call a 'conceptual space'). For instance, legal scholarship governs what sort of acts we think of as unlawful. But, because women, for example, were formerly excluded from these practices, they neglected to consider and regulate the sorts of oppressive behaviors to which women are sometimes subjected - among these, sexual harassment, date rape, and marital rape.

Like Fricker, Pohlhaus argues that the exclusion of certain epistemic agents from participation in these meaning-generating practices has resulted in the marginalization of these agents. These agents are marginalized, she claims, because they lack the conceptual resources required to understand the experiences they have.[22] Fortunately, Pohlhaus and Fricker both argue that marginalized epistemic agents, seeing the inadequacy of the available conceptual resources, can develop a new body of resources with which to understand their experiences.[23]

[22] This is what Miranda Fricker (1999) refers to as a hermeneutical injustice.
[23] Miranda Fricker used the work of Susan Brown Miller and the case of Carmita Wood to argue that women developed the concept of sexual harassment to fill a void in the existing conceptual lexicon.

Consider, as an example, the concept of 'colorism'. To my knowledge, Alice Walker first introduced this term, defining colorism as "prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color" (1983: 290-291). In particular, colorism involves discrimination against, or preferential treatment of, certain people because of their proximity to whiteness. This includes, for instance, preferring lighter skinned black people to darker skinned ones. But it might also include, for example, discounting the narratives of lighter skinned black people or refusing to consider them members of the black community.

I first experienced colorism as a senior in high school, though at the time I did not have the conceptual resources needed to understand my experience. A college recruiter from a historically-black college/university (HBCU) visited to offer me a scholarship. But upon meeting me, he didn't review the offer with me; instead, he handed me a packet with information and immediately departed. I later gathered that it is unusual for a college recruiter to behave in this way, and I inferred that what ultimately best explained what happened was that he was surprised (and perhaps, disappointed) by the fact that I am a fairly light-skinned biracial woman.

At the time, I knew that there was something unnerving and hurtful about the experience. But, as I did not possess the concept for colorism, I did not fully understand what had occurred, or why. It wasn't until many years later, when I acquired the concept, that I realized this was an instance of colorism. Learning this concept threw into sharp relief an experience that had been somewhat vague for me until then.

Moreover, learning this concept helped me to recognize other instances of colorism that I had previously overlooked. For instance, I began to notice that when black actresses are featured on the cover of magazines, they are often whitewashed. Still further, it appears that more roles are made available for lighter-skinned black actresses than darker-skinned actresses. And lighter-

skinned actresses, models, and singers appear on magazine covers more often than their darker-skinned peers.

The development of the concept for colorism better helps us attend to a phenomenon that was otherwise uninterrogated. This concept goes beyond racism, which merely involves discrimination based on race, and is meant to capture a more nuanced form of tone-based discrimination whereby people are rewarded for presenting as white, and ostracized when they fail to. It therefore captures a wide range of experiences that 'racism' will make obscure or opaque.

There are a number of other conceptual resources that have been developed by marginalized communities to attend to the unique aspects of their social experiences. Examples include 'misogynoir', as coined by Moya Bailey (2013), which describes the particular form of racialized sexism that black women face; the term 'microaggression', which captures the subtle forms of discrimination that people of color and women experience daily (Sue 2010); and as Miranda Fricker has noted, 'sexual harassment', a concept that allowed women to better understand and identify the work place harassment to which they were subjected.

I argue that the development of these resources depends on the social experiences that we have. Women of color experience misogynoir when they are accused of being overly angry or overly sexual as compared to other women; Latinx-individuals experience a microaggression when they are routinely asked where they are *really* from; and women experience sexual harassment when their bodies are sexualized in the workplace.

Marginalized groups need terms that enable them to make sense of these experiences. These resources allow marginalized knowers to understand what they are experiencing and to attend to similar experiences in the future.

Dominantly-situated knowers, who do not have these experiences, will not need these resources. Thus, the conceptual resources we have will depend on the social experiences that we need to describe. Consequently, I suggest that marginalized knowers and dominantly situated knowers, because they have different social experiences, will have a different body of conceptual resources. This has important consequences for what we can come to know.

Although there are conceptual resources shared by all epistemic agents, marginalized social groups will have conceptual resources in addition to those that are shared by all agents. As such, marginalized knowers may come to have a body of knowledge that is unavailable to dominantly situated knowers who lack the concepts needed for knowing. Consequently, I submit that dominantly situated knowers who do not possess the concepts developed by marginalized knowers will overlook whole parts of the world that those resources attend to. If an epistemic agent does not have a particular conceptual resource, it will be difficult for them to notice or attend to the fact picked out by that resource.

By way of illustration, consider the recently popularized research of the Himba tribe in Namibia (Roberson, Davidoff, Davies, & Shapiro 2006).[24] As Roberson, et.al's research has established, the Himba tribe, who lack the concept for the color picked out by the English word 'blue', could not correctly identify the odd square out when shown a group of eleven green squares and one blue one. The research thus suggests that without the concept for 'blue', members of the Himba tribe fail to attend to the color (i.e. they fail to see what is distinct about it), when they are presented with it.

In the same vein, a dominantly situated knower who lacks the concept of colorism may fail to realize that this is what I experienced in the example described above. In fact, they may

[24] Popular dissemination of this research is evidenced by articles in magazines such as *Business Insider* and *Science Alert*, but the original research appears in the work cited.

fail to see that anything off-color happened at all. Or, it may strike them as an ordinary occurrence that warrants no further investigation.

Of course, even when dominantly situated knowers come to learn of these conceptual resources, there may still be an issue of uptake. Dominantly situated knowers may be reluctant to adopt the resources developed by marginalized communities. In part, this is because dominantly situated knowers may suspect that the newly developed concept picks out, or attends, to nothing. As such, there are whole parts of social reality that marginalized knowers are well-poised to investigate and analyze, and that dominantly situated knowers may ignore entirely.

Conceptual resources are but one part of the epistemic standpoint, however. Work must be done, still, to explain how an epistemic standpoint emerges. Let me turn to that task now.

3.2 An Epistemic Standpoint

As I said earlier, feminist epistemologists who offer an epistemic account of the standpoint thesis shift their analysis from one's relationship to labor to the social experiences a knower (or group) has as a consequence of their marginalization. Consequently, a standpoint emerges, in part, as a result of the shared social experiences of a particular marginalized group. Additionally, as I suggested above, the emergence of a standpoint depends on that marginalized group developing the conceptual resources necessary to understand their social experiences.

A standpoint emerges in several stages. The first stage occurs when a group of people share that they have had a similar social experience, and recognize that this experience is one they have because of some aspect of their social identity. As an example, consider a group of black men and women who confide in each other that they have been excluded from certain events or groups because they are darker skinned, or have been subject to greater punishment or harsher treatment than their lighter-skinned peers, even when they engage in the same sort of

behavior. This group will come to realize that this is an experience they all share, and that it is an experience they share because they are dark skinned.

This is the stage of consciousness-raising. Consciousness-raising, applied to this example, involves dark skinned black people coming to the realization that there are experiences they share just in virtue of the fact that there are darker skinned. It thus involves moving beyond the realization that 1) they are all dark skinned and 2) that this is an experience they all happen to share. That is to say, it requires that they realize that it is an experience they share *because* of their skin tone.

The second stage involves naming this experience. This requires developing the concept, if one does not exist already, to appropriately capture the experience they share. Thus, we see the development, for instance, of the term 'colorism' to name the experience this group shares as a result of being dark skinned. Equipped with this concept that names their social experience, members of this group are well positioned to notice other instances of colorism.

We might ask what makes this an 'epistemic' standpoint. I have so named it because the emergence of a standpoint on this account depends on epistemic agents having certain conceptual resources. If the group, described above, merely discusses their experience of being discriminated against but never attends to the unique flavor of it, they are not in a position to know anything about the world above and beyond what they know about their collective experiences. Thus, without the conceptual resource, there is nothing that unifies, organizes, or directs their thought.

Let me now briefly discuss how this account addresses the other commitments taken on by standpoint epistemology. This account claims epistemic privilege with respect to social and political questions relevant to the oppression of systematically disadvantaged groups. This

includes “the character, causes, and consequences of the social inequalities that define the groups in question” (Anderson 2017).

In part this epistemic privilege is the result of one’s status as an ‘outsider-within’. As Sandra Harding writes, those who are marginalized can “see patterns of belief or behavior that are hard for those immersed in the culture to detect” (Harding 1991: 124; see also Collins 1986: S15). But marginalized standpoints further claim epistemic privilege because their oppression gives them fewer interests in remaining ignorant about their social oppression; conversely, dominant groups are invested in maintaining or justifying their dominant social positioning such that it distorts their vision of social relations.

Regarding the accessibility of claims made from the epistemic standpoint, one need not be a member of a particular social group in order to make claims from that standpoint. For instance, someone who is white can recognize and classify an act as an instance of colorism. But, when it comes to developing the concept needed to understand a social experience, and realizing that the experience is one that is had because of some feature of one’s social identity, this work must be done by those who possess the social feature in question. Thus, the concept of colorism needed to be developed by people of color, since they are subject to this sort of discrimination and are thus in the best position to recognize and name the experience.

I have endeavored in the previous sections to establish two points. First, I argued that whether an epistemic agent is in a position to know some proposition in the social domain will depend on some non-epistemic facts related to the agent’s social identity. Second, I argued that one’s relationship to labor and one’s social experiences (and the concepts developed to understand those experiences) are two such non-epistemic facts that influence what knowledge one has.

The project of exploring the relationship between social situatedness and knowledge is interesting in and of itself. But, as I will suggest in the next section, it is also a necessary project if we are to understand how and why the phenomenon of epistemic oppression arises.

4. Understanding Epistemic Oppression

I have endeavored, in the previous sections, to disentangle the various readings of the standpoint thesis that one might defend. In so doing, I aim to show that these readings can be used to better understand various forms of epistemic oppression discussed in the literature.

Following Kristie Dotson, I define *epistemic oppression* as the "persistent epistemic exclusion that hinders one's contribution to knowledge production", where epistemic exclusion is understood as "an unwarranted infringement on the epistemic agency of knowers" (Dotson 2014: 115). Epistemic oppression occurs when some group (or members of some group) suffers some form of epistemic injustice in a systematic way.

I want to start here by offering a provisional taxonomy of epistemic oppression so as to make the clear the ways in which epistemic agents can be epistemically excluded from the practices of knowledge production. In order to do this, I suggest that epistemic oppression can be distinguished as either active or passive. *Active epistemic oppression* occurs when an epistemic agent is prevented from sharing her knowledge. *Passive epistemic oppression*, by contrast, occurs when an epistemic agent is prevented from acquiring knowledge.

I argue that *hermeneutical injustice* is a form of passive epistemic oppression. A hermeneutical injustice is one in which a marginalized knower's "social experience remains obscure and confusing, even for them" because those experiences are excluded from collective understanding (Fricker 1999: 208). To illustrate, my inability to recognize my experience with

the college recruiter as an instance of colorism is a hermeneutical injustice that occurred because I lacked the term for 'colorism'.

Willful hermeneutical ignorance and *testimonial injustice* constitute forms of active epistemic oppression. Willful hermeneutical ignorance occurs when a dominantly situated knower refuses to acknowledge or use the conceptual tools developed by marginalized knowers and, as such, fails to understand or misinterprets parts of the world (Pohlhaus 2011). This happens, for instance, if when I try to share with someone my experience of colorism, they refuse to accept that colorism is a real phenomenon and so dismiss my interpretation of an event as an instance of colorism. Testimonial injustice occurs when a dominantly situated knower fails to take seriously the testimony of a marginalized knower for reasons related to the marginalized knower's social identity (Fricker 2007). This might happen if, for example, a darker-skinned black person fails to take seriously my complaints regarding my experiences of colorism because I'm light-skinned.

I suggest that other forms of epistemic oppression, like *epistemic exploitation*, may be both active and passive. According to Nora Berenstain, epistemic exploitation occurs "when privileged persons compel marginalized persons to produce an education or explanation about the nature of the oppression they face" (Berenstain 2016: 570) It is oppressive, she argues, because it is "marked by unrecognized, uncompensated, emotionally taxing, coerced epistemic labor" (ibid). I suggest that this form of oppression is passive in the sense that existing social relations operate to occlude the fact that this sort of activity is labor. Marginalized knowers are thereby prevented from classifying this sort of activity as labor. And it is active in the sense that, occasionally, when marginalized knowers try to share knowledge of their oppression with the dominantly-situated, they are met with skepticism or outright hostility.

I will argue here that hermeneutical injustice and willful hermeneutical ignorance can be understood using the epistemic reading of the standpoint thesis. Next, I will argue that epistemic exploitation can be understood using the material reading of the thesis.

The existing versions of the standpoint thesis do not, I argue, provide us with the resources necessary to understand testimonial injustice. It is for that reason that I have sketched the general commitments of the view, in order to pave a way to construct additional readings by which we might understand other forms of epistemic oppression not discussed here. At the close of this section, I will gesture at an additional reading of standpoint epistemology that I believe requires more development, but that I argue can do important work in clarifying testimonial injustice.

4.1 Epistemic Oppression and the Epistemic Reading

According to Fricker, hermeneutical injustice occurs when a person's "social experience remains obscure and confusing, even for them" because those experiences are excluded from the collective understanding (Fricker 1999: 208). Thus, on Fricker's view, hermeneutical injustice occurs when a knower is unable to make sense of some aspect of one's world because they have been excluded from playing a part in the collective understanding. Thus, one's experiences are obscured, even from one's self, because the interpretative practices necessary to make sense of that social experience have not yet been developed.

To illustrate, Fricker points to a memoir from Susan Brownmiller that details what we today name sexual harassment. Brownmiller recounts the experience of Carmita Wood – an employee in the Cornell department of nuclear physics – and a group of students who discover that they have all had similar experiences of being groped by men while in their workplace.[25]

[25] Although Fricker fails to note this fact, it is important to acknowledge that Carmita Wood is a black woman, as her intersectionality is relevant to her experience of sexual harassment and to her understanding of that experience.

Brownmiller describes the women's decision to have a "speak-out in order to break the silence about this", only to realize that the "'this' they were going to break the silence about had no name" (Brownmiller 1990: 281; quoted in Fricker 2007: 150).

According to Fricker, the existing hermeneutical resources left a "lacuna where the name of a distinctive social experience should be" (Fricker 2007: 150-151). As a result, these women lacked a proper understanding for what we are now easily able to identify as sexual harassment. They were thus wronged, in their capacity as knowers, in that they were prevented from understanding a significant part of their social experience.

Willful hermeneutical ignorance, on the other hand, occurs *after* marginally situated knowers have developed their own conceptual resources. Willful hermeneutical ignorance occurs when two conditions are met. First, marginally situated knowers have developed conceptual resources such that they are able both to understand and communicate their experience to others. And second, these conceptual resources are dismissed by dominantly situated knowers, thus rendering unintelligible the claims made by marginally situated knowers.

To elaborate, willful hermeneutical ignorance occurs when dominantly situated knowers fail "to enter into cooperative interdependence with marginally situated knowers" (Pohlhaus 2011: 725). Unlike with mere hermeneutical injustice, in cases of *willful* hermeneutical ignorance, a marginally situated knower has developed the resources needed to make sense of her social experience. However, dominantly situated knowers either fail, or refuse, to utilize those resources in order to enter a collective understanding with the marginally situated knower. As a result, dominantly situated knowers remain willfully ignorant, both of what the marginally situated knower is attempting to communicate, and of the marginally situated knower's conceptual resources.

Pohlhaus invites us to consider willful hermeneutical ignorance as it applies to concepts like 'white privilege' or 'date rape'. As she writes, although "having a [conceptual] resource like the concept of 'date rape' alleviates an epistemic injustice, anyone who has discussed this issue on a college campus knows that there is still a good deal of epistemic injustice thwarting the use of this concept for knowing the world well" (ibid: 724).

Additionally, one might consider concepts like 'marital rape'. Until epistemic agents began to use the conceptual resources necessary to understand marital rape, many failed to recognize that a rape victim's perpetrator could be their spouse. As such, we failed to afford these victims protections against this sort of abuse until well into the 1990s (Ryan 1995).

Pohlhaus provides a further case, drawing from an example first used by Fricker from *To Kill a Mockingbird.* Consider the following excerpt from the novel:

> "*You* felt sorry for *her*, you felt *sorry* for her?" Mr. Gilmer seemed ready to rise to the ceiling.
>
> The witness realized his mistake and shifted uncomfortably in his chair. But the damage was done. Below us, nobody liked Tom Robinson's answer. Mr. Gilmer paused a long time to let it sink in. (Quoted in Fricker 2007: 24; italics in original)[26]

Pohlhaus argues that Robinson is only able to 'realize his mistake' because he understands that the jury will misinterpret his words. That is, Robinson realizes that the jury will not use the same conceptual resources that he is to understand *why* it is that he felt pity for Mayella. Instead, given the conceptual resources of their white supremacist framework, they will fail to see that it is possible for there to be a genuine connection between Mayella, a poor unwed white woman, and Robinson, a poor, black man. As Pohlhaus writes, "Robinson's feelings and his reasoning have

[26] Note that Fricker uses this example to motivate her case for testimonial injustice. Pohlhaus instead argues that this case more clearly exemplifies willful hermeneutical ignorance.

no proper expression readily available using [conceptual] resources calibrated solely to the experienced world of those who live in positions of privilege under patriarchal white supremacy" (Pohlhaus 2011: 727). Thus, the members of the jury misunderstand Robinson because they have not yet begun to use the conceptual resources that would allow for them to understand what Robinson knows.

There's a clear sense in which these two categories of epistemic oppression are tied specifically to the epistemic reading of (S). Thinking about standpoint epistemology in terms of conceptual resources, and the relationship between a knower's social location and the conceptual resources she employs, helps to make clear *why* these various forms of epistemic oppression occur.

According to Pohlhaus, there are conceptual resources that are part of our shared conceptual repertoire, but these resources have largely been influenced by dominantly situated knowers. In part because, as I discussed earlier, marginalized knowers are largely excluded from the meaning-generating practices in which we develop new conceptual resources. The result is that the predominant conceptual resources are not suited to make sense of those experiences.

Prior to the development of their own, independent conceptual resources, marginalized groups will be utilizing the resources of the dominant standpoint. And because those resources were not developed with the social experiences of the marginalized in mind, those resources will not be useful to marginalized groups as they attempt to interpret their social experiences. This results in hermeneutical injustice: "the social experiences of members of hermeneutically marginalized groups are left inadequately conceptualized and so ill-understood, perhaps even by the subjects themselves" (Fricker 2007: 6-7).

It is because (S_E) reveals that our conceptual resources are not independent of our social experiences that we are able to see the way in which marginalized groups – whose experiences are not reflected in the predominant conceptual resources – suffer a hermeneutical injustice. Of course, epistemic injustice does not cease once hermeneutical injustice is eliminated, as the work still remains for those resources to be received within the larger social world. Thus, even when hermeneutical injustices are largely addressed, marginalized groups may still be subject to willful hermeneutical ignorance as they attempt to communicate their experiences to dominantly situated knowers. This sort of epistemic injustice is also distinctly tied to the epistemic reading of (S).

Consider that the situatedness of the dominant knower will not make salient those features of the world that the marginalized knower's conceptual resources attend to. As a result, the dominant knower can use this fact to dismiss the knowledge claims of a marginalized knower, as well as to dismiss the conceptual resources required to understand those knowledge claims. This happens because the resources the marginalized group is using will appear to the dominantly situated knower to "attend to nothing at all, or make something out of nothing" (Pohlhaus 2011: 722). This occurs particularly because those resources will be drawing attention to features that are not within the experienced world of the dominantly situated knower.

Consequently, dominantly situated knowers may dismiss the conceptual resources developed from the perspective of marginalized standpoints before learning to use them. When a marginally situated knower's conceptual resources and knowledge claims are dismissed in this way, the knower is subject to willful hermeneutical ignorance.

To return to the example from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, we see that the jury fails to understand what it is that Robinson is communicating because "dominantly situated people can

dismiss both the possibility that there is anything to be known here and any conceptual resources that might have been developed to make sense of the experienced world of the marginally situated" (ibid: 728). As Pohlhaus argues, this occurs because "marginally situated people cannot demonstrate to dominantly situated people that there is a part of the experienced world for which dominant conceptual resources are inadequate", and still further, " the marginally situated cannot *call* the attention of dominantly situated knowers to those parts of the experienced world, because the conceptual resources to do so are unavailable or preemptively dismissed" (ibid).

In both the case of hermeneutical injustice and willful hermeneutical ignorance, we see that marginalized knowers are obstructed in their capacities as knowers. This obstruction, again, is due to the inadequacy of the prevailing conceptual resources, either to understand the social experiences of marginalized groups, or to allow for marginalized groups to effectively communicate those experiences to dominantly situated knowers.

Next, let me turn to the material reading and its applications to epistemic exploitation.

4.2 Epistemic Oppression and the Material Reading

As I discussed previously, the material reading of the standpoint thesis is somewhat out of fashion. However, I will argue here that this reading is useful in shedding light on epistemic exploitation. Women and people of color are subject to what Nora Berenstain (2016) calls epistemic exploitation, a form of epistemic oppression in which marginalized knowers are expected to educate dominantly-situated knowers about their oppression. Epistemic exploitation might involve, for instance, a woman of color being asked to explain to white women why it is inappropriate for them to touch her hair. This work is exploitative, Berenstain argues, because it often goes unrecognized and uncompensated, and places an unfair burden on those who are already marginalized.

I argue that emotional and cognitive labor constitute forms of epistemic exploitation. While Berenstain defines epistemic exploitation somewhat more narrowly, I suggest that including emotional and cognitive labor in this category captures the notion that, in performing this sort of labor, the mental energy of women and people of color is diverted away from their own projects, goals and interests in the service of someone else's. Thus, emotional and cognitive labor, as Berenstain argues, "[maintain] structures of oppression by centering the needs and desires of dominant groups" (Berenstain 2016: 570). Rather than thinking of emotional and cognitive labor as being exploited in service of some other form of oppression, I argue that in and of themselves, these forms of labor are exploitative.

I have suggested that epistemic exploitation is a form of both passive and active epistemic oppression because 1) marginalized knowers are prevented, given existing social relations, from recognizing this activity as labor and 2) when marginalized knowers try to express that this is oppressive, they are met with skepticism, thereby preventing them from sharing knowledge they have. Just as the epistemic reading of the standpoint thesis served to investigate hermeneutical injustice and willful hermeneutical ignorance, material readings of the thesis should function so as to make clear why this particular form of epistemic oppression occurs.

Material accounts of standpoint epistemology investigate the role of material conditions (and the way in which we organize our lives around those conditions) in shaping inquiry. In particular, material accounts examine capitalism, and I have suggested, white supremacist patriarchy. Primarily, this is because capitalism and the white supremacist patriarchy serve to legitimize, or justify, the material conditions they bring about. I suggest that capitalism and the

white supremacist patriarchy perform this function through a number of means. In particular, I will focus here on the role of schemas and legitimizing myths.

Virgina Valian writes that a schema is a

> …mental construct that…contains in schematic or abbreviated form someone's concept about an individual or event, or a group of individuals or events. It includes the person's or group's main characteristics, from the perceiver's point of view, and the relationship among those features. (Valian 1999: 103)

Gendered schemas, for instance, depict women as nurturers and care-givers, and men as warriors and providers.

Legitimizing myths, by contrast, are social narratives which serve to justify and maintain the position of dominant groups in a social hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto 1999). These myths "[indicate] how individuals and social institutions should allocate things of positive or negative social value" and serve as explanations for how the world is (Prato, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle 1994: 741). For example, they may justify existing systems of inequality by indicating that inequality is due to the innate inferiority of some groups compared to others (e.g. White nationalism, social Darwinism, and so on). Legitimizing myths include, for instance, racism and sexism, which provide a moral justification for discrimination along the lines of race and gender. Such myths attempt to naturalize social hierarchies by treating these hierarchies as naturally mandated.

While schemas function so as to shape our expectations, aid in the formation of generalizations, and make sense of the social world, legitimizing myths serve to justify the social world as structured. Importantly, legitimizing myths serve to justify our social arrangements by suggesting that those arrangements reflect natural inequalities. As Roland Barthes writes, "What

the world supplies to myth is an historical reality…and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality" (Barthes 1972/1957: 142).

We might, then, think of legitimizing myths as serving to justify our schemas. These in turn justify our organizing society in the particular way that we have. To illustrate: women are naturally suited to serving in the role of mother, wife, teacher, nurse, and so on, in virtue of the fact that they are by nature caring and giving. Thus, their subservient (and inferior) roles under capitalist patriarchy are legitimized by appealing to these myths.

I argue that capitalism and white supremacist patriarchy justify the material conditions they produce by the construction and maintenance of these schemas and legitimizing myths. They thereby justify the material oppression produced as a consequence. Legitimizing myths and schemas work together to engender a sort of blindness that inures us to the oppression produced by capitalism and white supremacist patriarchy. Schemas and mythes thus render invisible the oppressive features of capitalism and white supremacist patriarchy to those who benefit from it.

By drawing our attention to how capitalism and white supremacist patriarchy structure social relations, material accounts demand that we interrogate the oppressive social systems they enact and maintain. I suggest that material accounts make apparent the reliance on these schemas and legitimizing myths to justify our participation in an oppressive system.

Material accounts successfully accomplish this by making central the role of the *practical productive interactions* in producing knowledge. Social scientists Jack Spapeen and Leonie van Drooge define productive interactions as

> …exchanges between researchers and stakeholders in which knowledge is produced and valued that is both scientifically robust and socially relevant. These exchanges are mediated through various 'tracks', for instance, a research publication, an exhibition, a design, people

> or financial support. The interaction is *productive* when it leads to efforts by stakeholders to somehow use or apply research results or practical information or experiences. Social impacts of knowledge are behavioural changes that happen because of this knowledge. These changes may regard human well-being ('quality of life') and/or the social relations between people or organizations. (Spapeen and van Drooge 2011: 212, italics in original)

Thus, productive interactions yield information or experiences that are socially impactful in improving social relations.

This analysis of productive interactions is too narrow for my purposes. Practical productive interactions, I suggest, are broader so as to include those exchanges analyzing practical experiences and social roles. In particular, practical productive interactions are those interactions in which one attends to the type of labor in which they are engaged and the relation between that labor and one's social relationships of production. Social relationships of production are those relationships we must enter into in order to survive, produce, and reproduce our means of life.

In Marxist terms, practical productive interactions thus involve investigating how one's social positioning (as a laborer) is the result of a specific set of historical conditions. Namely, it involves realizing that one is a laborer in relation to a capitalist under a set of social conditions, i.e. capitalism. Practical productive interactions thus require that we critically interrogate the conditions of one's labor and what structures make those conditions possible, i.e. the supporting schemas and myths.

This point also holds for the material feminist. Practical productive interactions involve an examination of how one's status as, for instance, a caregiver (physically or emotionally) exists under a set of social conditions in which men are entitled to that care, i.e. patriarchy. Thus, we

see that emotional and cognitive labor is labor demanded of women and people of color, and owed to men, given the social relationships of production under white supremacist patriarchy.

Like productive interactions, practical productive interactions yield knowledge that is socially impactful. In practical productive interactions, however, the knowledge produced is knowledge of the schemas and legitimizing myths that are taken to justify one's oppression. Practical productive interactions thus require a reassessment of the schemas that have been taken for granted even by those occupying marginalized social positions.

A dominantly-situated knower is unlikely to have such a practical productive interaction, both because they aren't expected to engage in these forms of labor, and because they have come to represent these inequalities as reflecting nature. Moreover, the social relationship that dominantly-situated knowers stand in is that of beneficiary of the labor of others. For instance, the capitalist stands in relation to capital goods; men stand in relation to emotional caregiving. Thus, there is no need for them to consider the work that goes into the production of that good, so long as the good is produced.

In the case of epistemic exploitation (and emotional and cognitive labor) marginalized knowers are obstructed from recognizing their labor as labor, and from sharing knowledge of this fact once they acquire it. This occurs because capitalism and white supremacist patriarchy make this labor invisible to the dominantly-situated, and justify it by appeal to legitimizing myths and schemas. As these tools are successful to the extent that they seem to 'naturalize' inequalities, material accounts undermine these tools by questioning the legitimacy of these claims.

This is why, I submit, social movements challenging the underlying schemas and myths can be successful in dismantling capitalism and white supremacist patriarchy. As Meena Krishnamurthy (*ms*) writes in a discussion of white moderates and the Civil Rights movement,

"social movements can be and [are] used to help white moderates overcome their blindness". In a similar fashion, social movements like feminism, #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and so on, can help dominantly situated knowers overcome their blindness to anti-black rhetoric, misogyny, and other such oppressive schemas and legitimizing myths.

4.3 Testimonial Injustice

I have argued that we can understand hermeneutical injustice and willful hermeneutical ignorance under the epistemic reading of (S), and that epistemic exploitation can be understood under the material reading of (S). Where does that leave testimonial injustice? Unlike the injustices previously discussed, testimonial injustice cannot be understood using the existing accounts of the standpoint thesis. Let me briefly explain why I take this to be the case.

Testimonial injustice occurs as the result of identity prejudice (Fricker 2007: 27-28). In cases of testimonial injustice, identity prejudice influences a hearer's credibility judgment such that a negative identity judgment of the speaker leads to a credibility deficit.[27] The credibility deficit results in the speaker "receiving less credibility than she otherwise would have" (ibid: 17). Put simply, testimonial justice occurs "when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's words" (ibid: 1).

To understand why testimonial injustice occurs, we must first ask what might lead an interlocutor to give a speaker a deflated level of credibility. This does not occur because of any failure of conceptual resources, as with willful hermeneutical ignorance, nor does it depend on one's relationship to labor, as with epistemic exploitation. Rather, a credibility deficit occurs because a hearer assumes certain facts (related to reliability) hold about the speaker because of their identity.

[27] In contrast, a positive identity judgment may lead to credibility excess, in which a speaker "[receives] more credibility than she otherwise would have" (Fricker 2007: 17).

As an example, consider that black women are less likely to be believed when they report cases of rape and sexual harassment (Crenshaw 1994). This does not occur because we lack the concepts for rape or sexual harassment. Rather, I suggest, it occurs because there are assumptions about the hyper-sexual nature of black women (Crenshaw 1994). I argue that because black women are essentialized as being sexual, and because "non-whites are often perceived through schemas that represent them as less rational and more identified with nature and the body than whites", black women are less likely to be believed in these cases (Haslanger 2008: 213).

Thus, I suggest that testimonial injustice occurs when the interlocutor holds certain ontological presuppositions about the speaker. As such, we need an account of the standpoint thesis that examines the relationship between one's ontological commitments (about how the world is) and what one is in a position to know.

An ontological account of the standpoint thesis should investigate how our views about the essence of people and groups (among other features) impact what we can know. As an example, consider that if black people are viewed as being essentially lazy, then one might think poverty in the black community is owed to their laziness, rather than systemic forces that make it difficult for blacks to find good employment.

To date, no such account of the standpoint thesis exists. But I hope that this can serve as the prolegomenon for such a view.

5. Why Traditional Epistemology Occludes Epistemic Oppression

Epistemic oppression occurs, in large part, because marginalized knowers know some social facts that dominantly-situated knowers can't, or find difficult, to know. As a result, dominantly-situated knowers tend to discount the knowledge claims of marginalized knowers. I argue that in

order to understand epistemic oppression, we need to utilize the tools made available from the standpoint epistemological framework. To see this, I'll start here by offering a case that is agreed upon in the literature to be a standard illustration of epistemic oppression. I will then analyze what the traditional epistemologists has to say about this case and why any explanations he has to offer will fail to adequately address the issue.

The case I offer here comes from legal scholar Patricia Williams (1991). Williams describes being denied entry into a Benetton's located in New York City. The store is one which requires that patrons press a buzzer in order to gain entry. Though there were a number of other, white patrons in the store, Williams describes a white teenager approaching the door and smugly mouthing the words "we're closed". While an experience of outright anti-black discrimination, this in itself is not epistemic oppression. The epistemic oppression occurred later when Williams attempted to share her story in a symposium sponsored by the law review. The editorial board rejected her article for including a reference to race, which the board deemed to be in violation of their editorial policy.

What we see here, in particular, is willful hermeneutical ignorance. In asking Williams to omit the reference to her race, they fail to acknowledge that the experience is one she had in virtue of her race. In endorsing a race-neutral editorial policy, the board eclipses the experiences of people of color. In so doing, they commit a hermeneutical harm.

In analyzing this case, we can tease out a few important features that the traditional epistemologist will need to explain. But, as I will show, the traditional epistemologist does not have the resources to do so.

Let's begin by unpacking the case described by Williams. First, we should acknowledge that Williams, as a black woman, occupies a marginalized social position. Second, let's note that

the editorial board constitutes a dominantly-situated body, insofar as they have the power to determine collective meaning (by way of publishing, or not, certain works). Additionally, we see that Williams knows some proposition that the editorial board does not: *p,* that including a reference to race is relevant to grasping the explanation of the anti-black discrimination she and other people of color experience. Finally, we see that because the editorial board does not know this, they discount her knowledge by rejecting her article for including a reference to race. In so doing, they cause Williams to suffer an epistemic injustice.

In order to interpret this case as an instance of epistemic oppression, we need an epistemological framework that acknowledges that Williams has some knowledge that the editorial board lacks. Thus, to render this incident an illustration of epistemic oppression, we need an account that both acknowledges, and can explain:

i. that Williams knows that *p*
ii. that the editorial board doesn't know *p*, or why *p* is more difficult for the board to know, and
iii. why the editorial board might reject Williams's claim to knowledge that *p*.

I will briefly suggest here that traditional epistemology cannot satisfyingly explain these features.

As Allison Wylie notes, the conventional assumption in epistemology is that objective epistemic agents are non-specifically located and that they are neutral with respect to their subject of inquiry (Wylie 2003: 32). Following Rebecca Kukla (2006), I will call this assumption *aperspectivalism*. Aperspectivalism holds that it is a condition of knowledge that an objective epistemic agent's claims to knowledge are perspective-independent. That is, according to aperspectivalism, for an epistemic agent to truly be said to know some proposition *p,* that

proposition must be one which can be known by any epistemic agent, regardless of the social perspective that agent occupies.

Traditional epistemology further holds, as a key assumption, that social and historical facts are irrelevant to epistemic questions. Perhaps even more strongly, traditional epistemology might think that not only are these facts irrelevant, but that they are distorting. To some extent, then, traditional epistemology views social identity as a feature that compromises one's epistemic integrity (Haack 1993). Importantly, in endorsing these assumptions, traditional epistemologists assume that there is, in fact, some neutral, "view from nowhere", from which one can acquire knowledge.[28]

Given the traditional epistemologist's commitment to aperspectivalism, how can he explain that Williams knows that *p*? I submit that he can offer no satisfying explanation. The very fact that allows Williams to know *p* is her race. But, this is a feature that the traditional account suggests we disqualify from our analysis of knowledge. So there is some tension between the traditional epistemologist's commitment to aperspectivalism, on the one hand, and explanations of (i), on the other.

The traditional epistemologist can, of course, maintain a commitment to aperspectivalism, but in so doing he will have to reject that Williams knows that *p*. And so, the traditional epistemologist will have engaged in epistemic oppression.

Still further, without appealing to the social identity of the epistemic agent in question, traditional epistemologists cannot explain features (ii) or (iii), either. An explanation of both of these features requires that we state why Williams's knowledge is knowledge that the editorial

[28] I have argued in Toole (*chapter 1*) that these assumptions are associated with a particular version of traditional epistemology that Jason Stanley calls *intellectualism* (Stanley 2005).

These assumptions are not without their own problems. I will argue elsewhere that these assumptions ought to be dismantled for themselves being politically laden.

board doesn't have, and why they don't have the hermeneutical resources necessary to come to have that knowledge. Again, this would require offering an account of how social identity factors into knowledge, which is in tension with other commitments held by the traditional epistemologist. So even if the traditional epistemologists granted that Williams has knowledge, he has no story to offer to explain (i-iii) above.

Though I believe that the traditional epistemologist ought to reject aperspectivalism, I will not now argue for that. I merely mean to show here that traditional epistemology, so construed, not only obscures epistemic oppression, but perpetuates epistemic oppression. Traditional epistemology constitutes, to borrow language from Kristie Dotson, a third-order epistemic exclusion. According to Dotson, a third-order epistemic exclusion "proceeds from the 'outside' of a set of [conceptual] resources to throw large portions of one's epistemological system into question as a result of the goals of a given inquiry" (Dotson 2014: 129). Third-order epistemic exclusions occur when the existing epistemological systems (in this case, the traditional epistemic framework) are themselves the source of epistemic oppression (as opposed to the inadequacy or insufficiency of the conceptual resources of a given epistemological system). Thus, epistemic oppression occurs not just because our epistemological system, so structured, has inadequate resources for understanding marginalized knowledge, but because the system itself is committed to assumptions (like aperspectivalism) that are epistemically oppressive.

Thus, I argue that in order to eradicate epistemic oppression, we have to alter the oppressive epistemological systems that allow for this oppression in the first place. Standpoint epistemology is one step in the right direction towards achieving this goal.

6. Redefining Epistemology

Epistemic oppression has long been a part of our existing epistemic practices. This oppression has been neither subtle nor hidden, merely obscured from our understanding. My aim has been to show that standpoint epistemology is useful in that is gives us the tools needed to understand what we could not before. In the previous sections, I discussed the distinction between active and passive forms of epistemic oppression, and explored how each form can be illuminated by versions of the standpoint thesis. I argue that it is only by appealing to the standpoint epistemologist's project that these forms of epistemic oppression are revealed. But I also defend a stronger claim: that we cannot make sense of these forms of epistemic oppression without making use of standpoint epistemology.

The conceptual repertoire of traditional epistemology is ill-suited to make sense of the experiences and knowledge of the oppressed. I have argued here that the oppressed have access to certain bodies of knowledge that dominantly situated knowers do not have. Standpoint epistemology succeeds, where traditional epistemology fails, in offering a story that accounts for this fact.

Traditional epistemologies, which are atomistic in nature, consider the gender, sex, and other features of an epistemic agent's social identity, irrelevant to knowledge acquisition (Grasswick 2004). Still further, traditional epistemologies consider these distorting features that make it more difficult to acquire 'objective' knowledge. Traditional, atomistic epistemologies, long argued that epistemic agents can adopt a 'view from nowhere', and know some proposition without any reference to their situatedness (Nagel 1989). As a result, traditional epistemology fails to consider the role of an epistemic agent's social identity in making salient certain features

(and in obscuring certain others), and how this consequently influences what knowledge she is in a position to acquire.

Traditional epistemologies presume that some knowers are in a position to make knowledge claims that are 'neutral' with respect to a standpoint. However, given that knowers are socially situated and interdependent, it is unclear that any knowledge claims are or can be made independently of a standpoint. In fact, as many feminist critiques have noted, perspective-independence "itself is not a 'politically neutral' option in epistemology; rather, it is a piece of ideology, fueled by a history of specific interests and usually accepted without any argument or critical interrogation" (Kukla 2006: 82-83).

Haslanger also notes this in regards to challenging the prevailing ideology that governs much of philosophical thought. Philosophy might take itself to be a hallmark of 'universal reason', but in fact, philosophy often maps onto false dichotomies regarding gender. As she notes, the familiar dichotomies that govern much of philosophical inquiry - the rational versus the emotional, the objective versus the subjective, the mind versus the body - situate philosophy as "masculine and in opposition to the feminine" (Haslanger 2008: 13). Thus, our epistemic practices and ideals, far from neutral, are rather positively viewed as masculine, setting themselves over and against the feminine domain of emotion and subjectivity.

Consequently, presupposing, as these epistemologies do, that our knowledge claims ought to be 'neutral' or made without reference to a standpoint, excludes some knowers from the practices of knowledge-production and dismisses their claims from consideration as knowledge. Primarily, this occurs by holding the claims of marginalized groups to a standard that itself fails to be neutral. Traditional epistemologies themselves, which have long been governed by dominantly situated knowers, operate from the position of a dominant standpoint. In failing to

acknowledge this, traditional epistemologies are too quick to dismiss claims that conflict with the assumptions of their own standpoint. This occurs because traditional epistemologists fail to understand how their own dominant social positioning influences what features of the world they notice and what facts they are then in a position to know.

Simone de Beauvoir offers an example of this in her examination of how men respond to women who express disagreement with their claims. She writes

> In the midst of an abstract discussion it is vexing to hear a man say: "You think thus and so because you are a woman"; but I know that my only defense is to reply: "I think thus and so because it is true," thereby removing my subjective self from the argument. It would be out of the question to reply: "And you think the contrary because you are a man," for it is understood that the fact of being a man is no peculiarity (de Beauvoir 1989/1949, xxi).

As de Beauvoir captures here, women's claims can be dismissed on the basis that those claims were made from the female standpoint. Men, on the other hand, who may take themselves to be in a neutral position, do not similarly see their claims as being subject to dispute because they are made from a male standpoint. Men thus reject women's claims, in cases such as this, because they take women to be making knowledge claims from the female perspective, which lacks the objectivity of the neutral male perspective.

I argue that this point applies more broadly. Traditional epistemology perpetuates epistemic injustice precisely because it takes itself to be neutral and absent of the 'peculiarities' of gender, sex, race, and so on. But knowers are situated, and so too is our knowledge.

I want to close with an example from Rachel McKinnon, one which I think standpoint epistemology can explain easily but with which traditional epistemology will have some

difficulty. In this example, McKinnon considers how a male-to-female transition alters what a person is in a position to know:

> Now consider a trans woman who transitions in her 20s. I've spoken to many trans women who transitioned in their 20s or 30s who've had the experience where pre-transition they had no real concern about walking home on a particular route at night. But post-transition, they were acutely afraid of that same route, and they changed their behaviors according. What was taken to be known—that women experience fear and concern about walking home alone in the dark—took on a new depth of understanding when the same agent occupied the social identity and position of a woman being confronted with walking home alone in the dark. (McKinnon 2015: 437)

These women came to know what they were not in a position to know before - that this route cannot be taken because it is dangerous. This knowledge is made available because they now occupy a woman's standpoint.

There are myriad examples, both real and theoretical, like this one. And this knowledge cannot be dismissed simply because it is available from one standpoint but not another. But that is the route that the traditional epistemologist's narrow conception of knowledge will have us to take. If traditional epistemology is to accurately represent the various forms of knowledge one can have, it must be open to the accounts offered by standpoint epistemology.

Chapter Three: On Social Identity and Epistemic Peerhood: In Defense of Epistemic Privilege

Standpoint epistemologists are committed to the view that an epistemic agent's social identity makes a difference in what propositions she is in a position to know. Relatedly, many standpoint epistemologists have identified the further claim that some epistemic privilege can be drawn from the position of powerlessness. Rebecca Kukla, for instance, writes

> Most standpoint theorists have insisted upon two further claims: (1) that some contingent features of knowers can give them not only different but *better, more objective knowledge* than others have, and (2) that social positions of marginalization and structural disadvantage, such as those inhabited by women, African-Americans, or the working class, yield epistemological advantages, giving those who occupy them the potential to see truths that are inaccessible from the point of view of the dominant center. (Kukla 2006: 81-82, italics mine)

Rachel McKinnon similarly suggests that

> …those with a particular situatedness— particularly those with oppressed intersectional identities—have, as a consequence of having their identity within a social structure, an *epistemic advantage* in accessing certain kinds of knowledge, especially of the structures of oppression themselves. (McKinnon 2015: 428 italics mine)[29]

And Nancy Hartsock, arguably the progenitor of the view in feminist thought, analyzes this claim as it relates to the historical-material account of standpoint epistemology, writing

> In particular, I will suggest that like the lives of proletarians according to Marxian theory, women's lives make available a *particular and privileged vantage point* on male supremacy,

[29] McKinnon's wording suggests that one has epistemic privilege in virtue of occupying an oppressed social identity. This is the strong thesis. I will defend the moderate claim here, that one can engage in the process of consciousness-raising and thereby achieve an epistemically privileged position.

a vantage point which can ground a powerful critique of the phallocratic institutions and ideology which constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy. (Hartsock 1983: 284, italics mine)

Let's call the idea that an oppressed social position affords for 'better, more objective knowledge', an 'epistemic advantage', or a 'privileged vantage point', the *epistemic privilege thesis*. This thesis, in some form or other, is present in the works of a number of other feminist thinkers, including Marilyn Frye (1983), Gayle Rubin (1984), Patricia Hill Collins (1986), Maureen Linker (2014), and Ashwini Vasanthakumar (2016), just to name a few.

The epistemic privilege thesis is controversial. After all, what does it mean for some knowledge to be 'better', or 'more objective'? While some epistemologists merely resist the characterization of epistemic privilege as it is offered here, still others, including some feminist epistemologists, argue that we should give up altogether the idea that any kind of epistemic privilege can be attributed to those in the social margins (Bar-On 1993; Janack 1997). And even those who are open to the idea of epistemic privilege argue that the notion needs a radical rethink (Fricker 1997).

I believe that the controversy surrounding this thesis is owed primarily to unclarity and vagueness in the literature. We need not abandon the idea of epistemic privilege. Rather, the notion stands in need of explication and support. I will start here by offering one way of developing the epistemic privilege thesis that appeals to the notion of epistemic peers that is available in a separate literature. In explicating the epistemic privilege thesis in terms of more "mainstream" concepts or tools I hope the thesis can gain wider acceptance.

Next, using the epistemic privilege thesis, I aim to show that marginally situated knowers and dominantly situated knowers are not epistemic peers. In order to defend this claim, I first establish that marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged in the social domain. I then

draw on the peer disagreement literature in order to show that, in the social domain, dominantly situated knowers fail to satisfy the conditions for peerhood as developed in that literature.

Establishing that marginalized knowers and dominant knowers are not in the position of epistemic peerhood is an important task, and is of more than just idle theoretical concern. As several philosophers working on the topic of epistemic oppression have noted, certain epistemic harms are produced when dominant knowers position themselves as the epistemic peers of marginalized knowers. In particular, I'll argue that such positioning results in the testimony of marginally situated knowers being devalued, dismissed, or discredited, or it functions to undermine the confidence of marginally situated knowers in their own judgments. My hope is that, in establishing that marginally situated knowers are epistemically privileged, we can better understand, address, and eventually avoid, such harms.

Before delving into the argument, I would like to provide a more nuanced characterization of the view I will be defending. The discussion above somewhat obscures the fact that there are two ways to read the epistemic privilege thesis:

1. There is an epistemically privileged standpoint from which better, more objective knowledge is available, or
2. Epistemic agents who are positioned in a certain way have some epistemic advantages.[30]

The first reading suggests that, in virtue of being socially oppressed, marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged. This reading thus implies that some social perspectives are epistemically more valuable because they lead to objectivity in a way other perspectives do not.

[30] Other epistemologists, Bat-Ami Bar On (1993), for instance, have characterized epistemic privilege in terms of social distance from the social center. Thus, on these conceptions, the more marginalized a person is (and so, the further that person is from the social center) the greater epistemic privilege that person has. This is compatible with the first reading of the thesis.

This is a stronger reading of the thesis than I will defend. Instead, I defend the more modest second reading.

The second reading suggests that some epistemic advantage is available from, but not guaranteed by, one's position of social marginalization. In order to draw this epistemic advantage, there is first a process of consciousness-raising, in which one develops a critical consciousness about the nature of one's oppression (Wylie 2003). Consciousness-raising involves unmasking the ideological misrepresentations of the dominant, and recognizing the connection between these ideological misrepresentations and one's own oppression. For instance, consciousness-raising among black women might involve recognizing how European standards of beauty are used to discriminate against black women who cannot or will not conform to these standards (by having curly natural hair versus smooth, silky hair).

There's a sense in which the modest reading of the epistemic privilege thesis seems trivial. It's obvious, for instance, that where you are seated in the room makes a difference to what facts about the room you know, and that someone with a better seat may have an epistemic advantage because of their positioning. But the epistemic privilege thesis is controversial because it suggest that features traditionally thought to be non-epistemic, like facts about one's social identity, can offer some epistemic advantage. This is the claim I aim to make more plausible.

But before I do so, allow me to offer a few clarifications regarding my terminology. I will use the terms 'socially marginalized knowers' and 'marginally situated knowers' interchangeably. These terms all refer to socially marginalized agents who occupy an oppressed social location. Second, I will use the terms 'dominantly situated knowers' or 'dominant knowers' to refer to agents who *do not* occupy positions of social oppression. Finally, when I say that marginalized knowers and dominant knowers are not epistemic peers, this claim is restricted

to the *social domain.* Characterizing this domain is tricky. Largely, what I have in mind when I speak of the 'social domain', is those questions relating to the oppression, both political and epistemic, of members of marginalized groups, or those questions that have evidential relevance to where there is oppression.

To illustrate those questions which I believe are, properly considered, members of the social domain, consider the following propositions: "that some comment *x* is homophobic"; "that some act *x* is an instance of sexism (or racism)", and other statements of this form. I believe these are paradigmatic of the sorts of questions I have in mind. I will here defend the general claim that marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged with respect to questions such as these. Consequently, I will show that with respect to such questions, marginalized knowers and dominant knowers are not peers.

This formulation does obscure questions of intersectionality, which, for the purpose of this paper, I largely set aside here. I do, however, wish to note that it is possible to be marginalized with respect to some social propositions but not others, and thus epistemically privileged with respect to some questions but not others. Cisgender, heterosexual Black men, for instance, are marginalized along the dimension of race, but not along the dimension of gender. Thus, black men, compared to white women, for instance, are epistemically privileged with respect to questions about race, but not with respect to questions about gender.

Here is the general plan for the paper: first, in section 1 I will provide two cases that I claim are representative of the phenomenon that I want to target and convey the importance of. These cases are designed to illustrate the epistemic harms I believe arise when dominantly situated knowers position themselves as the epistemic peers of socially marginalized knowers. Next, in section 2, I use the notion of epistemic peerhood to get a better grasp on the concept of

epistemic privilege. Then, in section 3 I offer four arguments that serve to explain how and why socially marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged. Finally, in section 4 I apply these arguments to the cases surveyed in section 1 to more concretely illustrate how, in the social domain, marginalized knowers and dominantly situated knowers are not in the position of peerhood because the former, but not the latter, are epistemically privileged in this domain.

1. Two Cases of Epistemic Harm

I aim to show that socially marginalized knowers and dominantly situated knowers are not epistemic peers in the social domain, and that refusing to acknowledge this perpetuates certain social and epistemic harms. We first need some examples that will help us focus on the issue in question. Here are two:

> *Unwilling Barista:* Elena is really looking forward to the in-house philosophy conference her department hosts every year, so she arrives bright and early, and in serious need of coffee. She greets her colleagues and bounds toward the coffee pot only to discover, after her first sip, no less, that this is yesterday's coffee. So she brews a new pot. But when she returns for the much-anticipated cup, the pot is empty. It turns out that her fellow conference goers, all white men, really wanted coffee, too. Slightly annoyed, she mentions to her friend Preston how sexist it is that all the men waited for her to arrive and brew a fresh pot. But Preston replies "You're overreacting - you see sexism everywhere! Isn't it more likely that they just don't know how to use the coffee pot?"

> *Homophobic Frat:* Damien is a gay man and a newly initiated member of one of his university's many fraternities. He is thrilled at his fraternity's open-minded outlook and embrace of openly gay men. But a few incidents lead Damien to believe that his fraternity

isn't as open-minded as he thought. Worryingly, at a recent chapter meeting one of his brothers complained about the upcoming theme party requiring that all brothers wear the new male romper, remarking, "This dress code is gay!". Damien mentions the comment to the chapter president, Mark. Damien suggests that the statement is homophobic. But Mark responds: "Are you sure? Sometimes gay people are too sensitive - I think it's a harmless figure of speech."

Let's begin by briefly analyzing what is happening in each of these cases. In each, a socially marginalized knower – Elena in the former case, Damien in the latter – is reporting that a statement, event, or behavior is problematic in some way. And in both cases a dominantly situated knower – Preston in the former case, Mark in the latter – is disagreeing with the marginalized knower's interpretation or analysis of the event in question.

How should Elena and Damien respond, under the assumption that Preston and Mark are their epistemic peers, respectively? According to the popular Equal Weight View, which I'm adopting here, if you learn that a peer disagrees with you about some proposition, you should become less confident in your opinion about that proposition.[31] Thus, if Elena and Preston are epistemic peers, then Elena should lower her confidence that her colleagues' behavior was sexist, and increase her confidence that they just didn't know how to use the coffee pot. In the same vein, if Damien and his fraternity president are epistemic peers, then Damien should lower his confidence that the statement was homophobic, and raise his confidence that it's just a harmless expression.

However, to treat Preston as the epistemic peer of Elena, and Mark as the epistemic peer of Damien, facilitates at least two harms - gaslighting and testimonial injustice. According to Nora Bernstein, "gaslighting functions to undermine a person's confidence in their grasp on reality

[31] The Equal Weight View is not without opposition. See, for instance, Kelly (2010) or Licon (2013).

leading to an overall sense of self-doubt and a lack of trust in one's perceptions" (Berenstain 2016: 580). Gaslighting is particularly pernicious because it has the aim of "getting another not to take herself seriously as an interlocutor" (Abramson 2014: 2), thus causing her to lose knowledge she once possessed.

Testimonial injustice, on the other hand, occurs when an hearer fails to take her interlocutor's testimony seriously for reasons related to that agent's identity (Fricker 2007). Gaslighting is a form of testimonial injustice (or so McKinnon 2017 argues) but it is distinct in this respect: when an epistemic agent is gaslit, the agent comes to doubt *herself* as a reliable source of knowledge (the agent is both the subject *and* object of doubt). In testimonial injustice, however, the epistemic agent is doubted to be a reliable source of knowledge by someone other than herself (thus, the agent is only the object of doubt), for reasons related to identity prejudice.

Arguably, in each of the cases described above the socially marginalized knower experiences both forms of epistemic injustice. However, I intend gaslighting to be the salient feature in *Unwilling Barista.* Consider Preston's response to Elena's plight. In suggesting that she is overreacting, he causes her to doubt that her analysis of the event is accurate. He instead implies that she is an unreliable judge by suggesting that she sees sexism even where there is none. He thus undermines her confidence in her own assessment, causing her to lose knowledge that she had - that her colleagues behaved in a sexist manner.

Regarding *Homophobic Frat,* read this case as a straightforward illustration of testimonial injustice. In order to dismiss Damien's testimony, Mark invokes a collective conception of gay identity - that gay people are too sensitive. He then uses this collective conception to justify his rejection of Damien's testimony. He thereby refuses to take Damien's testimony seriously under

the assumption that Damien is an unreliable source of knowledge given his identity as a gay man.

I argue that these harms occur because Preston and Mark position themselves as the epistemic peers of Elena and Damien, respectively. In responding as they do, Preston and Mark assume that they are as equally qualified as Elena and Damien to evaluate what counts as sexism or homophobia. But, I will argue, this is a mistake. Using the notion of epistemic peerhood, I will develop a more tractable formulation of epistemic privilege that allows us to see that, in the cases described above, Elena and Damien are epistemically privileged, and as a result, Preston and Mark are not their epistemic peers.

2. From Epistemic Peerhood to Epistemic Privilege

As I have discussed above, the concept of epistemic privilege is somewhat murky. But we need the epistemic privilege thesis in order to show that socially marginalized knowers, like Elena and Damien, need not lower their confidence in those cases where dominantly situated knowers disagree with their assessments. So work must be done to bring some clarity to this notion.

My aim here is to explain the nature of epistemic privilege by appealing to the notion of epistemic peers as it has been developed in the peer disagreement literature. The concept of epistemic peerhood is central to the discussion of peer disagreement, in part because whether we ought to respond to disagreement by rationally adjusting our confidence, or remaining steadfast in our beliefs, depends on whether the person with whom we disagree is a peer or not. To illustrate, consider this example, popularized by David Christensen (2007):

> *Mental Math.* My friend and I have been going out to dinner for many years. We always tip 20% and divide the bill equally, and we always do the math in our heads. We're quite accurate, but on those occasions where we've disagreed in the past, we've been right equally

often. This evening seems typical, in that I don't feel unusually tired or alert, and neither my friend nor I had more wine or coffee than usual. I get $43 in my mental calculation, and become quite confident of this answer. But then my friend says she got $45.

How I ought to respond to the disagreement in this case turns on whether I take my friend to be an epistemic peer. If I take us to be peers, then I ought to modify my confidence. But if I do not regard her as my peer, then I may be under no such requirement.[32] But the question remains: how do I determine if she is my peer?

According to some working on this topic, an epistemic peer is "someone who is, somewhat roughly, antecedently as likely as you are to get things right (on matters of the relevant kind)" (Enoch 2010: 956; see also Elga 2007 and arguably Christensen 2007). This leaves us with an even more difficult question: how am I to determine whether my friend is antecedently as likely to get things right as am I? This is the question that needs answering.

A more tractable way of answering this question can be had if we appeal to two other characterizations of peerhood available in the literature. The first comes from Thomas Kelly, who describes an epistemic peer as someone who is "[equal] with respect to their familiarity with the evidence and arguments which bear on the question" (Kelly 2010: 174). A person who satisfies this condition is an *evidential equal*. The second condition, suggested by Jennifer Lackey, is that an epistemic peer is someone who is "equally competent, intelligent, and fair-minded in their assessment of the evidence and arguments that bear on the question" (Lackey 2010: 302). Lackey calls this a *cognitive equal*.

[32] Of course, it's true that even if my friend is not quite my epistemic peer, the fact that she disagrees may be some reason to modify my confidence a little, though not as much as I would if she were my epistemic peer. That is, I should not, in such a case, allow my friend's disagreement to undermine my confidence that what we owe really is $43 (I should not, for instance, suspend judgment). For a mathematical approach to this question, see Elga (2007).

I confess consternation as to what Lackey may mean by 'equally intelligent and fair-minded'. As such, I center my attention on her stipulation that an epistemic peer is someone who is 'equally competent', as I take it there is a shared intuitive grasp for what it means to be competent with respect to one's evidence. For the sake of clarity, however, let me state that by 'equally competent', I mean one is equally competent at adopting the confidence their evidence makes rational, and inferring, on the basis of one's evidence, what one has a rational permission to infer.

Applying these conditions to *Mental Math*, I can establish that my friend is my epistemic peer if she is equally as likely as I am to get things right, and this is true when she

1. Has equally strong evidence relevant to the question at hand, and
2. Is equally competent with respect to the evidence relevant to the question at hand.

If my friend either fails to be my evidential equal or my cognitive equal, then it follows that she is not my epistemic peer. I suggest that epistemic privilege can be defined in such a way that it parallels this characterization of epistemic peerhood.

2.1 Epistemic Privilege Examined

Where Christensen, Elga, Enoch, and others have suggested that peerhood is met when someone is equally likely as you are to be correct, I suggest that epistemic privilege is met when someone is *more likely to be correct*. I argue that a person is more likely to be correct when she either

1. Has a greater body of evidence, or
2. Is more competent with respect to the evidence relevant to the question at hand.

Thus, a person is epistemically privileged with respect to some question when she is either an evidential superior or a cognitive superior.

Let's consider how this applies to a revised case of *Mental Math.* Let's imagine that in this revised scenario my friend has indeed had more wine than usual, enough that it is impairing her ability to mentally calculate the bill. Let's call this version *Mental Math**. In *Mental Math**, I am *epistemically privileged* with respect to the question of our total owed. In this scenario, my judgment is superior since she is impaired but I am not. At the very least, it's clear in this version that we are not cognitive equals. We can just as easily modify the case so that my friend satisfies the second condition of peerhood but fails the first (if, for instance, we imagine that she just ventured a guess at the total independently of looking at the bill, then she would fail to be my evidential equal).

What I mean to demonstrate by *Mental Math** is the following. If I am epistemically privileged with respect to the question at hand, then it follows that my friend fails to be my epistemic peer. Epistemic peerhood and epistemic privilege are, then, very closely related.

That some people are epistemically privileged with respect to a domain is not, by itself, a controversial claim. In fact, I believe examples of epistemic privilege abound in the literature. As Adam Elga (2007) notes, we defer to our weather forecasters both because we believe they have more information than we have, but also because we believe they have superior judgment with respect to that information. Still further, the concept of epistemic privilege helps us to make sense of a number of other practical cases. It is not controversial, for instance, to suggest that ultrasound technicians and auto mechanics are epistemically privileged over patients and auto consumers, respectively, because the former are either evidentially or cognitively superior to the latter.

Additionally, consider Sarah Stroud's analysis of *doxastic partiality* in the case of friendship. Stroud argues that it is a constitutive element of friendship that we believe the best of

our friends. I hope I may be forgiven for merely reporting without much argumentation that I find this analysis to be somewhat implausible. But the intuition at the heart of this analysis is not irredeemable. To the contrary, I believe this is a prime example in which epistemic privilege can be put to good use.

Rather than thinking doxastic partiality is something owed to our friends, I argue that it's rational to be partial towards one's friend, even in light of contravening evidence, simply because one is *epistemically privileged* with respect to one's friends. That is, when it comes to our friends, we have a greater body of evidence against which to consider new evidence.[33] In defense of this point, consider the following example from Stroud:

> Suppose, for instance, that a third party reports that your friend Sam recently slept with someone and then cruelly never returned any of that person's calls, knowingly breaking that person's heart…[L]et's stipulate that the story is not something which you know to be false. Rather, what is being presented to you is new information about your friend. (Stroud 2006: 504)

Assuming that this third party is merely an acquaintance, and not a friend, of Sam's, it seems to me that you are epistemically privileged with respect to Sam's character. That is, given your friendship with Sam, you have more evidence of his or her character than does the third party making the report. As such, your friendship places you in a better position to evaluate how likely it is that Sam knowingly broke this person's heart.

The preceding examples, which I take to strongly motivate the analysis of epistemic privilege I offer above, demonstrate that epistemic privilege should not, at least as articulated here, be taken as controversial. And yet, the standpoint epistemologist's defense of this thesis has

[33] Sarah Stroud argues that epistemic or doxastic partiality towards our friends is constitutive of friendship. Here I'm merely suggesting that friendship makes one epistemically privileged with respect to one's friend.

been widely resisted. I take this to show that the real controversy regarding epistemic privilege is not about whether some people are epistemically privileged or not; rather, the controversy is about whether in virtue of being marginalized, marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged with respect to some question.

2.1 Worries about Epistemic Privilege

I believe this controversy is owed in part to the worry that claims of epistemic privilege conflict with the commitments of traditional epistemology.[34] Epistemic privilege is anathema to *objectivism*, the view that knowledge is produced "only through dispassionate, disinterested, value-free, point-of-viewless, objective inquiry" (Harding 1990: 87).[35] I suspect this commitment to 'objective inquiry' is motivated, in part, because there is a lingering worry that knowledge that fails to meet this condition is somehow partial or distorted. There is a clear tension here, as the epistemic privilege thesis suggests that not only can knowledge which does not satisfy the condition of objective inquiry be produced, but that in some cases, that knowledge is more accurate.

Cassandra Pinnick (1994, 2005) raises an additional concern, asserting that there is no evidence to support the epistemic privilege thesis. Pinnick is quite strong in her rebuke of the project, writing, "any self-respecting epistemologist who places a premium on evidence-driven belief and justification ought not to accept the hypothesis" (Pinnick 2005:108). Worryingly, as Kristina Rolin (2006) notes, more than ten years after Pinnick's 1994 publication, "the thesis of epistemic privilege still remains without evidence to support it" (Rolin 2006: 126).

[34] I am aware that what I call 'traditional epistemology' is thinly described here, but this merely serves an entry point to my argument and is not central to it.
[35] See also Daston (1992), Code (1995), and Kukla (2006).

In the next section, I will attempt to vindicate the epistemic privilege thesis. I will argue that marginalized knowers and dominantly situated knowers gather different evidence and reason in ways such that dominantly situated knowers are epistemically worse off than marginalized knowers. In so arguing, I believe I can address both concerns canvassed above.

Recall, of course, that my principal aim here is to show that, in the social domain, socially marginalized knowers and dominantly situated knowers are not epistemic peers. I intend to establish this by demonstrating that socially marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged in the social domain. It is obvious, of course, that if dominantly situated knowers have less evidence or are less competent with respect to that evidence, then they are not the epistemic peers of marginalized knowers. But it is less obvious that marginalized knowers do, in fact, have greater evidence or are more competent than their dominantly situated counterparts. However, below I will provide a number of arguments that I believe adequately motivate this claim.

3. Four Arguments for Epistemic Privilege

Standpoint epistemologists argue that features of one's social identity make a difference to what she is in a position to know. Here I will argue that not only do features of one's social identity make a difference in what one in a position to know, but that it may, in some cases, make one more likely to form true beliefs. In order to defend this claim, I must show that in the social domain, marginalized knowers either have a greater body of evidence or that they are more competent with respect to that evidence. I will offer four arguments to defend this claim. The first three arguments I will appeal to will establish that marginalized knowers are evidentially superior to dominantly situated knowers. The fourth, and final, argument will show that dominantly situated knowers are cognitively inferior to marginalized knowers.

3.1 The Argument from Double Consciousness

A well-known view that we can appeal to in order to defend the claim that marginalized knowers are more likely to form true beliefs comes from W.E.B. Du Bois (1903). The view I have in mind is that of *double consciousness,* or dual perception.[36] I call this the *argument from double consciousness*.

Double consciousness refers to the experiences of African Americans who, due to their oppression, were forced to see the world both from their own perspective and from the perspective of their oppressors. Regarding this experience, Du Bois writes

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois 1903: 5)

The concept of double consciousness suggests that when you are not dominantly-situated (in terms of race), you see yourself through two conceptions - first, as the dominantly-situated see you, and second, as you wish to see yourself. It further explores the inner conflict that arises when these perspectives clash.

Standpoint epistemologists have argued that this concept can be extended to marginalized knowers more broadly to account for the view that their position of marginalization allows for a more robust perspective of the world. This is due to the fact that members of marginalized groups are forced to both engage with the world from their position of powerlessness, and to anticipate the way in which the dominantly-situated engage with the world.

[36] This is often referred to as dual vision. To avoid ableist connotations I have instead shifted to dual perception.

Defending this application of double consciousness, Allison Jaggar writes that the marginalized perspective "allows them to see not only the lives of the ruling class but also the lives and experiences of the oppressed, and their worldview will be shaped by the interests of the totality in a given historical period" (Jaggar 1983: 371). Gaile Polhaus similarly argues that "if a person's social position makes her vulnerable to particular others, she must know what will be expected, noticed by, and of concern to those in relation to whom she is vulnerable" (Pohlhaus 2012: 717).

As an example, consider this quote from McKinnon:

> …one's social location as, say, a cisgender black heterosexual woman, as a member of an oppressed class, may allow her to "recognize that many of the concepts and procedures adopted by [a] discipline are problematic when her colleagues do not, precisely because she is able to see the objects of study both with the eyes of a researcher trained in the discipline and through her own experience from a marginalized social location". (McKinnon 2015: 428; citing Crasnow 2013: 417)

As McKinnon's example illustrates, a cisgender black heterosexual woman will have more evidence than her dominantly-situated colleagues because she will evaluate the procedures adopted by her discipline from two perspectives - that of a trained researcher and that of a marginalized person. Her colleagues, however, are likely to only see things from the perspective of trained researchers.

Consider, by way of illustration, several recent advertising debacles, most notably, clothing store H&Ms decision to feature a black model wearing a sweater that said "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle", and Dove's soap commercial that showed a black women removing her shirt to reveal a white woman. These ads were taken to task for being racist - the former because

the term ‘monkey’ was at once a common pejorative used to describe black people, and the latter because it implied that black people are dirty and that after using Dove soap they will be clean, and therefore white. Because black people are still vulnerable to white people, they are better placed to consider how these campaigns would be viewed as attacks on black identity. However, because white Americans are not vulnerable to Black Americans in the same way, they are less capable of considering how the campaigns might be viewed.

This vulnerability is key to the argument from double consciousness. Marginalized knowers are vulnerable to dominantly situated knowers, and as such, they have to consider how the world (and their actions and beliefs) will be seen from the dominant perspective. The converse relationship does not hold. As a result, dominantly situated knowers are not forced to ‘see’ the world or consider things from the marginalized perspective. This is but one way in which marginalized knowers have greater evidence in the social domain than do dominantly situated knowers.

3.2 The Argument from Second Natures

I also argue that marginalized knowers draw epistemic privilege from their position of oppression because this social positioning allows them to develop a capacity to notice and attend to what dominantly-situated knowers do not. Call this the *argument from second natures*. This argument is distinct from the preceding one in the following respect. Where double consciousness is a capacity one has to interpret or evaluate some piece of information from multiple perspectives, a second nature is a persistent mode of engagement one has with the world in virtue of some aspect of one’s social identity.

The argument from second natures proceeds as follows. As a result of their oppression, marginalized knowers are more likely to notice or attend to features of the world that dominantly

situated knowers are likely to overlook. This argument is largely inspired by Rebecca Kukla (2006), who argues that our experiences of oppression permit us to develop a finely tuned perceptual capacity that allows us to 'see' reasons that are unavailable to others.

Kukla defends this claim by drawing on Aristotle's work on moral perception. Aristotle argued that moral perception is a function of moral education. That is, the better-educated one is morally, the better one will be at perceiving moral facts. This capacity to see moral facts is what Kukla calls a "contingently inculcated second nature" (Kukla 2006: 83).

So what is a 'second nature'? We might think of a 'second nature' as a tendency, or habit, one has developed through training or as a result of cumulative experiences to notice certain features. These second natures will make a difference to how we see the world, such that two people (one with a morally developed second nature and one without) might notice very different facts even given the same causal inputs. Consider an example: A morally well-educated person might notice that an elderly woman on the subway is searching for a place to sit and offer his seat; a person who has not been well-educated morally might notice the elderly woman, but not notice that she is in need of a seat and so fail to offer his to her.

The idea of a second nature can be extended beyond the moral domain to the social one. In the social domain, second natures function as patterns of habituation. I argue that we become attuned to patterns that turn up in our experience, such that we come to develop a second nature whereby we notice these patterns over time. These patterns of experience modulate our attention, shifting our attention away from certain areas and towards others.

The pattern of experience of particular interest here is that of oppression and other social marginalization. As a result of a history of oppression and marginalization, marginalized knowers become habituated to notice facts and distinctions as they relate to oppression. Thus,

because marginalized knowers are more likely to experience oppression, they are better positioned to have developed a capacity, through habituation, to recognize instances of oppression.

Consider an example. Ruby is a physically disabled graduate student in philosophy. In her department, it is common for graduate students to go out for drinks with the professors after a seminar. But, they tend to go to establishments without accessible entrances. Ruby notices that it is very often the case that after-work functions and events take place at locales without accessible entrances.

Worth noting is the fact that these establishments aren't accessible is information that is available (and easily) for anyone who attends the after-seminar events. But those who are not disabled are not, as Ruby is, attending to the fact that there aren't accessible entrances. Further, Ruby's experience, in which she is excluded, from participating in certain events, is an experience she has in virtue of some facet of her social identity, namely, her disability. Thus, there is an important connection between one's social identity and the experiences one has (or is likely to have) as a result of that social identity.

This argument finds support from the literature on embodied perception, which suggests that the experiences we have - and the cognitive significance of those experiences - are shaped by social identity. Linda Alcoff (1999), for instance, argues that social identity is relevant to beliefs not because identity determines judgment, but because "identity can in some instances yield access to perceptual facts that themselves may be relevant to the formation of various knowledge claims" (Alcoff 1999: 83).

Drawing on the account of embodied perception advocated by Merleau-Ponty, Alcoff argues that social identity (and the experiences we have in virtue of our social identity) helps to

structure our perception. Social identity structures perception in the sense that it directs our attention, such that what element of an experience we attend to will depend on facts about our social identity. Following Alcoff, I defend this argument by suggesting that social identities are correlated with particular experiences of oppression or privilege. Experience is how we construct meaning, and consequently, our experiences contribute to our interpretation of an event. As such, social identity constitutes the necessary background from which agents know the world. In essence, Alcoff argues that perception is an interpretive exercise, and how we interpret a particular event will, to some extent, be shaped by our social identity. Furthermore, if different social identities confer different experiences, then it follows that people from different social identities may interpret the same event differently. Thus, two people may form different beliefs about the same event.

To illustrate, let's return to the case of Ruby. Imagine that Ruby complains to her department chair that the department's events are discriminatory because they often fail to provide accessibility accommodations. The chair might disagree, simply because, as a non-disabled person, he does not have the experience of wanting, but being unable, to attend an event because of accessibility issues. As such, he may be oblivious to the pattern of events being scheduled at locales without accessible entrances.

The argument from second natures can easily account for this. I argue that we have experiences of oppression or privilege as a result of our social identities. These patterns of experience lead to the development of a second nature, whereby we are habituated to notice features that conform to those patterns. Thus, for those who experience a pattern of oppression, they will notice instances of oppression. Conversely, those who do not experience a pattern of

oppression are unlikely to notice oppression. Thus, I claim that social identity will make a difference to what features of the world we notice.

Importantly, this means that as a result of their experiences of oppression, marginalized knowers have a greater body of evidence with respect to the social domain. As Alcoff and Kukla argue, our social identity - and the experiences that we have in virtue of our social identity - shape our dispositions and habits to notice (or overlook) some parts of the world. Thus, it is reasonable to think that social identity places us in a position to form some epistemic judgments (and not others). In the social domain, marginalized knowers are well placed to notice and attend to those features of the world that contribute to their oppression. Dominantly positioned knowers, however, are not similarly well placed.

3.3 The Argument from Conceptual Resources

The third argument I offer to suggest that marginalized knowers have a greater body of evidence is the *argument from conceptual resources*. Conceptual resources are the body of resources one uses to understand one's experiences. Note that while Gaile Pohlhaus calls this body of resources 'epistemic resources', I will use the term 'conceptual resources' so as to avoid these resources being mistakenly identified as epistemic features.[37]

According to this argument, positions of marginalization force those occupying them to develop a body of resources with which to understand their experiences. This argument is similar to, but distinct from, the argument from second natures. That argument drew our attention to how our patterns of experience habituate us to notice certain facts about the world (or obscures certain

[37] I have argued elsewhere that conceptual resources do not directly count as evidence. As such, conceptual features (themselves) do not count as traditionally epistemic features, i.e. features relevant to the acquisition of knowledge. However, I will show here that, in some cases, conceptual resources play an epistemically significant role in that they can make some bodies of evidence more or less salient, depending on features of the epistemic agent in question.

facts). The argument from conceptual resources focuses instead on how the concepts we are in possession of influence our understanding and interpretation of events.

Conceptual resources include the language, concepts and criteria that epistemic agents use to interpret events and make sense of the world. Conceptual resources are flexible and admit of change. For instance, the concept "transgender" is a fairly new tool developed in order to make sense of the experiences of people whose gender does not correspond with their sex assigned at birth. Furthermore, we can revise our criteria for the concept of 'womanhood' so that it includes trans women.

Conceptual resources, Pohlhaus suggests, are developed in response to, and in order to understand, our social experiences. However, Pohlhaus argues that many conceptual resources are created and distributed by dominantly situated knowers. These resources will thus reflect the experiences of the dominantly positioned. As such, marginalized knowers will find the existing epistemic repertoire ill-suited to understanding or communicating the unique experiences they share in virtue of their oppressed social locations.

Marginalized knowers can, however, develop new conceptual resources to make sense of their experiences of oppression. But, Pohlhaus argues, they will find it difficult to share these resources with dominantly situated knowers. This is, in part, because the conceptual resources we have will determine what aspects of the world we notice. Because dominantly situated knowers do not possess the conceptual resources needed to understand the parts of the world experienced by marginalized knowers, they are likely to think that the conceptual resources used by marginalized knowers pick out or attend to nothing. As José Medina writes, "Because the [socially] privileged (or non-disadvantaged) do not have the experience of being unable to properly conceptualize certain things, they have little opportunity to realize (and little motivation

to accept) that there is more to see and talk about than what the culturally available hermeneutical tools enable people to recognize" (Medina 2013: 73). Precisely for this reason, Medina argues, we can think of those who are socially marginalized as having some epistemic advantage, because they have "a *more acute attentiveness to hermeneutical gaps* (at least in some respects, if not in others)" (ibid, italics in original).

Consider the concept of 'misogynoir', a term coined by queer Black feminist Moya Bailey to name the "specific violence of representational imagery depicting Black women" (Bailey 2013: 341). Misogynoir examines the particular racialized sexism that Black women experience. The 'angry black woman' trope, which characterizes black women as "aggressive, ill tempered, illogical, overbearing, hostile, and ignorant without provocation" (Ashley 2014: 27), is one example of misogynoir. Now consider the following example, modified from Nora Berenstain (2016). Imagine that Amina, a Black woman, is expressing frustration to a white male acquaintance, Ben, about what happened to her at lunch. She recounts that a white woman touched her hair without her permission and commented on its softness. Ben asks Amina why she's so angry about something so insignificant - after all, he suggest, the white woman was probably just curious or she wanted to offer a compliment.

I argue that Amina has experienced misogynoir, and that she will recognize that Ben's response is an instance of this. The white woman trying to touch her hair is also an instance of misogynoir. As Berenstain writes regarding this example, there is a "history of white objectification of Black women's bodies and the racist entitlement that is inherent in a white person touching a Black woman without her permission" (Berenstain 2016: 576). But Ben, who we can stipulate lacks this concept, will fail to see that his response is both racist and sexist -

first, in suggesting that her emotional response is unjustified in this circumstance, and second, in dismissing the cultural history that prompts her emotional response.

The evidence regarding the misogynoir that Amina experiences is available both to Amina and Ben. However, only Amina has the conceptual resource (she can have the concept even though she may not have the word) that allows her to recognize this evidence as evidence of misogynoir. As such, conceptual resources can make a difference to what evidence a person has, and social identity makes a difference to what conceptual resources a person is in possession of.

This means that marginalized knowers have a greater body of evidence in two respects. First, marginalized knowers have a more robust set of conceptual resources, because they have both the resources disseminated by dominantly situated knowers, and those resources they have developed to understand their experiences of oppression. Dominantly situated knowers, however, tend to have only the resources developed by their own social location. Second, because marginalized knowers have a more robust set of resources, they are likely to notice features of the world that dominantly situated knowers overlook, because they (but not dominant knowers) have the resources needed to understand those features.

3.4 The Argument from Ignorance

Thus far I have given three arguments to support the claim that marginalized knowers have a greater body of evidence with respect to propositions about the social domain. The last argument I'd like to offer supports the claim that marginalized knowers are cognitively superior with respect to the evidence. This argument largely depends on showing that dominantly situated knowers are 'blocked', or prevented, from reasoning from the available evidence to the belief they are rationally permitted to infer.

The argument I offer here to support this claim draws from work on the epistemology of ignorance. As such, let us call this the *argument from ignorance.* The aim of epistemologies of ignorance is to explore ignorance as it is cultivated and maintained by socio-political structures. In particular, epistemologists of ignorance argue that ignorance is a structural phenomenon in which what we know and, more importantly, fail to know, is rooted in an ignorance of the social relations that enable oppression. Philosophers in this tradition argue that ignorance is not merely a passive lack of knowledge, but can also be actively maintained by both individual and systemic structures.

Interestingly, many epistemologists of ignorance argue that active ignorance is the result of resistance to evidence. That is, even when epistemic agents have access to correct information relevant to the question at hand, they still fail to form true beliefs. Charles Mills, Linda Martin Alcoff, and others working in this tradition locate the source of this ignorance in the motivations we have (to know or not to know) in virtue of our social identity.

Alcoff and Mills each argue that dominantly situated knowers are less capable of accessing the truth as it pertains to social matters because they have a vested interest in remaining ignorant of those conditions that allow for their dominant social positioning. Alcoff, for instance, writes that oppressive societies will often represent forms of inequality as basically just and fair. Those in the dominant group will believe the world is basically just and fair because their membership in the dominant group secures these benefits for them. That the world seems just and fair will thus shape the interpretive practices of those who are dominantly positioned.

Alcoff (2007) suggests that in addition to enabling access to certain kinds of knowledge, social identities also confer certain motivations. Mills (1997; 2007), for instance, has argued that whites have a positive interest in misrepresenting the world in ways that support their dominant

position. Similarly, Alcoff suggests that men have this same interest. To paraphrase Mills (1997), men (like whites) will have a motivation to 'see the world wrongly', and thus will be motivated to ignore sexism (and racism) if it is fundamentally at odds with their worldview.

Following Amia Srinivasan (*ms*), I call this phenomenon, in which one's access to the truth is obscured because of the motivations conferred by one's social identity, "bad ideology". According to Srinivasan, bad ideology, which she defines as "structures of thought and practice whose function it is to obscure the truth in order to sustain systems of oppression", shapes and constrains our access to truth. I propose that we think of the relationship between epistemology of ignorance and bad ideology in this way – epistemologies of ignorance investigate bad ideology and the manner in which bad ideology shapes and constrains our access to truth.

Bad ideology can account for dominantly situated knowers reasoning poorly from their evidence. To illustrate, Lauren Woomer (2017) explores how white Americans reason badly from the evidence available to them regarding the severity of police brutality. She begins by noting the overwhelming availability of evidence that indicates that Blacks are treated unequally by the cops in comparison to whites (e.g. the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement; heightened media attention to the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and countless others; reports released by the DOJ on Baltimore and Ferguson, and so on). And yet, she notes, many white Americans take police brutality to be an isolated incident. She writes

> The "isolated incident" theory, which often takes the form of asserting that the police officer in question is an exception to the norm, is only one of the many alternate explanations given by skeptical whites. Other examples include, for instance, the theories that black people commit more crimes and so are rightfully targeted by police, that the officers' fears were

justified in such incidents, that these incidents wouldn't happen if black people had complied with police orders, and so forth. (Woomer 2017: 4)

Woomer's research supports the analysis that white Americans fail to change their beliefs to reflect readily available evidence regarding police brutality.[38] Epistemologies of ignorance suggest this unwillingness to revise one's beliefs occurs because it conflicts with the prevailing narrative that white Americans would choose to believe - that police are generally trustworthy, and that Blacks are predisposed to criminal behavior.

There are a number of similar explanations available in the philosophical and psychological literature to support this argument. One need only look to the research on motivated reasoning and cognition to see that cases abound in which an epistemic agent's motivations shape her interpretation of the evidence and, subsequently, what belief she arrives at (Kunda 1990: 5; Molden and Higgins 2005: 297). Consider, for instance, confirmation and disconfirmation bias. Confirmation bias involves selectively attending to evidence that confirms one's prior belief (or cutting off the search for further evidence once one's belief has been confirmed), where disconfirmation bias involves holding to higher standards of evaluation any evidence that challenges one's belief.

By way of illustration, consider reactions to widely disparate cases of police brutality, like Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. White Americans who believe that black people could behave differently during police encounters in order to avoid police brutality might appeal to Alton Sterling's case as confirmation for their belief. Given that Alton Serling was in possession of a firearm and was arguably resisting arrest, white Americans might think this is a case where they can justifiably believe that the incident wouldn't have happened had Sterling complied with police orders. But Philando Castile's case poses a clear challenge - he complied with the officer's

[38] Woomer refers to this phenomenon as *agential insensitivity*.

demands, disclosed that he had a concealed carry permit and a concealed weapon, and was still shot by the officer. Philando Castile's case would seem, then, to be a strong counterexample to the claim that blacks need only comply with police orders to avoid violent outcomes. However, many white Americans remain unpersuaded by Castile's case. By raising the standards of evaluation for this case - suggesting that we can't be sure because the camera footage is unreliable or inconclusive - white Americans can discredit this case as evidence against their belief.

Why does this happen? Primarily, because, as Srinivasan argues, we are socially determined to see through bad ideology. By this, I take Srinivasan to mean that some epistemic agents are more likely to be subject to 'seeing' or interpreting the world through bad ideology than are others. Dominantly situated knowers are, I suggest, driven by an interest in maintaining the status quo (by whites, men, etc.), and this leads to cognitive distortions that obscure one's access to the truth.

Marginalized knowers have an inverse interest. As Alcoff writes, "members of oppressed groups have fewer reasons to fool themselves about this being the best of all possible worlds, and have strong motivations to gain a clear-eyed assessment of their society" (Alcoff 2007: 44). I argue that this interest, coupled with their greater access to evidence (as established by the three arguments provided above) allows marginalized knowers to gain such an assessment. In the next section, I explore how we can apply these arguments to the cases discussed previously to show why dominantly situated knows and marginalized knowers are not epistemic peers in the social domain.

4. Analyzing Our Cases

Let's return now to the cases described at the outset of the paper. Recall that I described two cases, *Unwilling Barista* and *Homophobic Frat*, in which a socially marginalized knower reported that an event or statement was offensive in some way. In the former, Elena expressed the view that her colleagues waiting for her to brew the coffee was sexist. But her friend, Preston, suggested that she was overreacting. In the latter, Damien worried that a statement made by one of his fraternity brothers was homophobic. But his fraternity president, Mark, disagreed, suggesting that it was merely a harmless expression.

I worried that, in positioning themselves as epistemic peers, Preston and Mark cause Elena and Damien some epistemic harm - gaslighting in the first case, testimonial injustice in the second. But, I suggested, such harms can be avoided if we acknowledge that socially marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged in the social domain. To that end, I will first show that we can apply the first three arguments discussed above to *Unwilling Barista* in order to establish that Elena has a greater body of evidence than Preston. I will then apply the fourth argument to show that, in *Homophobic Frat*, Damien is better able to reason from the evidence than is Mark.

4.1 Unwilling Barista

If Elena takes Preston to be an epistemic peer, then she ought to reduce her confidence that her colleagues' behavior is sexist, and increase her confidence that they just don't know how to use the coffee pot. However, I aim to show that with respect to the question of whether her colleagues behaved in a sexist manner, Elena is epistemically privileged, and as such, she and Preston are not epistemic peers. It follows then that Elena is not required to lower her confidence that her colleagues behaved in a sexist fashion.

In *Unwilling Barista,* I argue that Preston does not have equally strong evidence as does Elena, and that this is the case for a number of reasons. First, we can use the argument from double consciousness to argue that Elena has more evidence than Preston because she has considered the issue from both the male and female perspective. I argue that because Elena is in a male-dominated field and so she is vulnerable to the men she works with in certain ways, she will have considered how she and other women are viewed from the perspective of her male colleagues. Elena has this dual perspective, whereas her male colleagues do not. As a result, she realizes that because the coffee is usually brewed by the female office staff, her male colleagues didn't think to brew any. And once it was made, they didn't think about who made it, or the fact that their colleague, who happens to be a woman, might have wanted coffee, too. Elena's colleagues fail to see that she is a woman who is *also* a philosopher participating in the departmental conference. They instead see Elena, as a woman, in relation to their desires and choices, rather than as a being with free consciousness (de Beauvoir 1949). Because of her dual perspective, Elena knows all of this. She thus knows that that her colleagues behavior is sexist because they, as well as Preston, fail to see her in the right light.

Alternatively, we might use the argument from second natures to argue that Elena has developed a capacity to notice features about departmental interactions that her colleagues may fail to notice, and as such she recognizes her colleague's behavior as one instance of a broader phenomenon. Elena is more likely to notice, for instance, that her department generally relies on the female staff to brew the daily coffee. I argue that she'll notice this because she may suspect that the way her male colleagues treat the female staff, in particular, is indicative of how they think of and treat women, generally. She may have noticed, for instance, that women graduate students in her department are more likely to be asked and expected to take care of basic

housekeeping tasks. Preston, and other men in the department, may fail to notice this simply because as men, the same is not expected of them. As such, he likely fails to see a pattern of behavior that Elena has picked up on.

Furthermore, Preston's response to Elena is illuminating in that it reveals his inability to think about what his alternative explanation implies. Elena is likely in a position to realize that her colleagues' inability to use the coffee pot is itself a manifestation of sexism. Generally, women are expected to accomplish such basic and menial tasks, and so many men typically don't take the time to learn them.

One might also appeal to the argument from conceptual resources to argue that Elena has a concept that Preston does not. For instance, Elena may by employing the concept of a *microaggression* to interpret the actions of her colleagues. D.W. Sue characterizes microaggressions as

> …brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, and sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group. (Sue 2010: 5)

Some examples of microaggressions include but are not limited to: asking an Asian or Latinx where they are *really* from (thereby suggesting that they are not really American); saying to a Black person that they are very articulate (suggesting that Black people are not typically well-spoken); or using a racial or ethnic group in a derogatory manner (for instance, saying "I jewed him down!" or "She gyped me!").

Elena may use this concept, and interpret her colleague's behavior as a microaggression. That is, she may view their behavior as an attempt to communicate that she, as a woman, is not

really a philosopher or that she does not *really* belong. Or, she may take their behavior to suggest that her proper role in the department is to take of care of tasks typically attended to by women, like brewing the daily coffee.

Preston is unlikely to have (or is likely to reject) this concept. The concept of a microaggression is still fairly new and still fairly controversial. Many associate the development of the concept with the rise of "a culture of victimhood". Articles on this topic have been presented in *The Atlantic (*Friedersdorf 2015; Lukianoff and Haidt 2015), *The New York Times* (Brooks 2014), and it is making its way into academic conversations, as well (Campbell and Manning 2018).[39]

Still further, when marginalized knowers try to share their experiences, and their interpretation of those experiences as microaggressions, they are often dismissed by their dominantly-situated companions. Saba Fatima (2017), for instance, writes that she is often told the following when she describes some incident as a microaggression

> The first set of advice…[appears] quite sensible, mostly because it [is] an appeal to rationality…I have been told many times that to assume prejudice in cases of microaggression is irrational. Many suggest that I need to be more open and objective in assessing my experiences. (Fatima 2017: 148).

As this is meant to illustrate, dominantly situated knowers often intimate that marginalized knowers are failing to be rational when they view some incident as a microaggression. What I believe is more likely is that dominantly situated knowers are failing to take up this concept. As a

[39] Interestingly, these are primarily liberal sources. One can only imagine how the subject is portrayed at more conservative media outlets.

result, dominantly situated knowers fail to recognize and take seriously the occurrence of microaggressions.[40]

I conclude that Elena is in a position to know and to notice features of sexism, and that she has the conceptual resources to understand these slights when they occur. Preston, however, is not similarly well placed to notice these events, and given his dominant social positioning, he likely does not recognize the concept of a microaggression. As such, Elena has a greater body of evidence to bring to bear on the claim that her colleagues' behavior is yet another instance of the sexism in her department. Given this, Elena is epistemically privileged with respect to this question. It follows that she and Preston are not epistemic peers.

4.2 Homophobic Frat

Just as in *Unwilling Barista*, if Damien and his fraternity president, Mark, are epistemic peers, then Damien should reduce his confidence that his brother's remark was homophobic, and increase his confidence that it is a harmless turn of phrase. However, I will argue that in this case, Mark is reasoning badly, and is failing to adapt his belief to the evidence. As such, I will argue that Damien and Mark are not epistemic peers.

First, I stipulate that Damien and Mark have an equal body of evidence in this case: they know what is meant to communicated, they share conceptual resources. Though this case is artificial, I believe the core epistemic features are shared with many real-life examples where people share evidence and yet reach different beliefs. As such, we can draw important lessons from the case as it is spelled out here.

I argue that, because of his position as a dominantly situated knower – that is, because he is a heterosexual man – Mark is blocked from reasoning from the available evidence to the

[40] I believe this is an instance of what Gaile Pohlhaus (2011) calls *willful hermeneutical ignorance*, a form of epistemic oppression in which a dominantly situated knower refuses to use the conceptual resources developed by marginalized knowers, thus rendering unintelligible the claims made by marginalized knowers.

conclusion that the statement is indeed homophobic. In order to defend this claim, we first need to investigate what inference Mark is entitled to, but failing to make. This requires that we do a little work to analyze the statement in question.

Damien's fraternity brother claimed that "The dress code is gay". What is meant by this, and how does the statement derive its intended meaning? First, what is meant is that the dress code is somehow undesirable or uncool or bad. Further, the statement derives this meaning under the assumption that being gay is all of these things – undesirable, uncool, bad. I submit that we cannot derive the intended meaning – that rompers are bad – without assuming that being gay is also bad. Furthermore, the fraternity brother who made the statement, and Mark, the fraternity president, must know this and be drawing on it, because otherwise the statement would have no meaning (or it would not communicate the intended meaning).

In denying that the statement is homophobic, Damien's fraternity brother is failing to rationally analyze the connection between what is meant (that rompers are undesirable) and how what is said derives its meaning (that being gay, like wearing rompers, is undesirable). That is, Damien's fraternity brother and his fraternity president fail to understand the implication of their own words. Why does this cognitive failure occur?

Ultimately, this is the result of Damien's fraternity brothers failing to put together the premises that lead to the conclusion they aim to arrive at. In other words, they are failing to put two and two together. This is partially the result of Damien's fraternity brothers seeing through bad ideology. I argue that as a result of bad ideology, Damien's fraternity brother's fail to consider under what conditions their statement is made true (that is, that rompers are 'gay' if being gay is bad). As Srinivasan writes, "differences in social position shape one's ability to access the truth under conditions of systematically deceptive ideology (Srinivasan *ms*: 18). Thus

I suggest that, even though the fraternity brother and Mark must be aware of the way the statement derives its meaning in order to use it successfully, they're blocked from connecting the dots between how that statement derives it meaning to the conclusion that the way in which it derives its meaning is in fact homophobic.[41]

Just as Mills argued that "white group interest in the racial status quo…needs to be recognized as a major factor in encouraging white cognitive distortions of various kinds", heteronormative interest encourages similar cognitive distortions (Mills 2007: 34-35). Furthermore, heteronormativity can lead to such cognitive distortions even if it is not consciously recognized or endorsed.

Even if Damien's fraternity brothers are not openly (or subconsciously) heteronormative, his brothers do not have a positive interest in questioning or dismantling the heteronormative patriarchal structure under which that statement derives its meaning. Damien, on the other hand, as a gay man who is harmed by heteronormative statements, does have such an interest and so he isn't invested in remaining ignorant of the statement in the way his brothers are. As Sandra Harding (1991) writes, "members of oppressed groups have fewer interests in ignorance about the social order and fewer reasons to invest in maintaining or justifying the status quo than do dominant groups" (Harding 1991: 126).

Though Damien and his fraternity brothers share evidence, Damien is able, where his brothers fail, to reason from that evidence to the claim that the statement is homophobic. This is because he does not have an interest in leaving such statements unexamined. Thus, his judgment on these matters is superior because he is not suffering from any cognitive distortions which

[41] Suppose Damien's fraternity brothers defend themselves by saying that the statement is an instance of a dead metaphor, and as such, it is not in any way meaningful.
My response is simplistic but true upon reflection. The statement is not a completely dead metaphor for us today in the context of use.

obscure his access to the truth about the claim being made. As such, Damien is epistemically privileged with respect to the question at hand, because he satisfies the second condition set out for epistemic privilege. It follows, then, that Damien and his fraternity brothers are not epistemic peers.

Concluding Remarks

There is a growing body of literature, of which this paper aims to be a part, that explores how our epistemic practices contribute to the epistemic oppression of socially marginalized knowers. I have argued that treating dominantly situated knowers and marginally situated knowers as epistemic peers is one such practice.

I expressed the worry that, if marginally situated knowers and dominantly situated knowers are treated as epistemic peers with respect to the social domain, then marginalized knowers should adjust their beliefs in light of disagreement, and reduce their confidence that their belief is the correct one. This leads to a number of epistemic harms, chief among them, gaslighting and testimonial injustice.

These harms occur because dominantly situated knowers fail to recognize that in the social domain, socially marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged - they have a greater body of evidence, and are better at reasoning from that evidence, than dominantly situated knowers. As such, we should defer to the testimony of marginalized knowers. To paraphrase Adam Elga regarding deference to experts, conditional on a marginalized knower having probability *x* in any social-proposition, our probability in that proposition should also be *x* (Elga 2007: 479). However, when dominantly situated knowers position themselves as the peers of marginalized knowers, they downgrade the credibility that ought to be given to marginalized knowers.

In order to avoid such harms, I have used machinery from the peer disagreement literature to establish that dominantly situated knowers and marginalized knowers are not in the position of peerhood. I suggested that marginalized knowers are epistemically privileged in the social domain. I offered four arguments to support this claim: 1) the argument from double consciousness, 2) the argument from second natures, 3) the argument from conceptual resources, and 4) the argument from ignorance. I showed that these four arguments can be used to establish that, in the social domain, marginalized knowers have a greater body of evidence or are better at forming the belief to which they are entitled. Consequently, it follows that marginalized knowers and dominantly situated knowers are not in the position of peerhood.

Acknowledging the relevance of social identity to evaluations of epistemic peerhood, at least in the social domain, has a number of important upshots. It allows us to consider in which cases we ought defer to the testimony of marginalized knowers, and it further places us in a good position to begin to think about who has the authority to speak on certain delicate issues. But perhaps most importantly, this conversation allows us to address the harms caused when we fail to acknowledge the epistemic privilege of socially marginalized knowers, and to ultimately envision how we ought to modify our epistemic practices in order to avoid such harms.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In 2016, shortly after the election of Donald Trump, *Saturday Night Live* revisited its famously popular "Black Jeopardy" sketch, this time featuring Tom Hanks as Doug, the sole white contestant. Typically, sketches feature the host asking questions about black tropes, culture, and stereotypes, much to the confusion and consternation of the lone white player. The sketch featuring Tom Hanks was notable because in this particular episode his character, Doug, who donned a "Make America Great Again" cap and a folksy accent, hilariously beat the black contestants to answer questions like "What can a skinny woman do for you?" Answer: "Not a damn thing", according to Doug. Throughout the sketch, Doug, the black contestants, and the black host bond over their shared distrust of the government and their love of curvy women. But the spell is broken with the Final Jeopardy question: "Lives That Matter". While his fellow contestants look on skeptically, Doug responds by saying: "I have a lot to say about this", and thus ends the sketch.

The answer to this question is meant to be obvious: "Black" - as in "Black Lives Matter". But Doug's response indicates that he doesn't find the answer so simple. Why, we might ask, did Doug struggle to reach this answer, especially given that he answered the other questions so easily?

I have argued in this project that cases like this can be understood using the framework of standpoint epistemology. Knowledge, I argue, is in many cases sensitive to non-epistemic features related to social identity. These features, I suggest, make a difference in what a person is in a position to know.

Consider Doug, a white man, may have had very little negative interaction with the police. Let's assume that his friend group is also largely white, and they too don't have many

interactions with the police (and that when they do, those experiences aren't negative). If this is the case, all of Doug's evidence may suggest that the police are caring and helpful, dedicated to protecting people from harm, not perpetuating it. And so, when Doug hears reports from black Americans about police brutality, he weighs those reports against his evidence and concludes that the reports from black Americans must not be credible. I argue that because of his race, and the experiences he has as a result of his race, that Doug is not in a position to know about police brutality - at least, not in the same way black Americans are in a position to know.

The Black Jeopardy sketch in general, and Doug in particular, is interesting because Doug is presented as an amalgam of what *SNL* and the popular media consider Trump supporters to be like. In presenting Doug in this way, *SNL* shed light on the clear harmonies between poor whites and blacks that transcend race - they have similar interests, they share economic fears. But the threat of police violence is largely invisible to many white Americans. As a result, many fail to understand why Colin Kaepernick kneels during the national anthem or why the slogan "Black Lives Matter" is significant to the black community. In dismissing these acts, or in re-appropriating them (for instance, by saying "Blue Lives Matter" or "All Lives Matter"), white Americans oppress black Americans, in a specifically epistemic way, by failing to take seriously the social oppression they are reporting and protesting.

In failing to acknowledge the relevance of social identity to knowledge, we too contribute to this oppression. As I have indicated in chapter two, traditional epistemology, characterized as a commitment to intellectualism, comes at a cost. It renders unintelligible epistemic oppression, and still more worryingly, may itself be an epistemically oppressive epistemological system.

I have argued that standpoint epistemology better empowers us to understand, address, and mitigate occurrences of epistemic oppression. In recognizing that knowledge may be

sensitive to social identity, we come to appreciate that there are facts about the social world that we may not know, but that others know all too well. And in acknowledging that some epistemic agents know things that we cannot, or do not, yet know, we recognize that our personal position of ignorance does not give us the right to deny the insights of others.

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